

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 11, inclusive, answered orally.

Questions Nos. 12 to 14, inclusive, resubmitted

Taoiseach's Meetings and Engagements

15. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach if he has spoken to or met the Polish Prime Minister Ms Beata Szydlo; and if EU reform was discussed. [49073/17]

The Taoiseach: I have not yet had the opportunity for a formal meeting with Polish Prime Minister Szydlo, though I did speak briefly with her in Gothenburg, as well as at the June and October European Councils, and September's Digital Summit in Tallinn. Ongoing political engagement with our EU and international partners remains crucial, especially as negotiations on Brexit proceed, and I will continue to take advantage of every opportunity to advance Ireland's interests with my fellow members of the European Council.

Questions Nos. 16 to 22, inclusive, resubmitted.

Cabinet Committees

23. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach the Cabinet committee in which housing is discussed. [49077/17]

The Taoiseach: Cabinet Committee D covers housing, climate action, infrastructure investment and delivery, the National Planning Framework and the Ten Year Capital Plan. Among other issues, this Committee is providing political oversight of our efforts to tackle the housing and homelessness issue. The Committee last met on the 23rd of November 2017.

Questions Nos. 24 to 35, inclusive, resubmitted.

Questions Nos. 36 to 47, inclusive, answered orally.

Child and Family Agency Services

48. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the progress in relation to providing 24 hour access to social work services; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50184/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I would like to take this opportunity to highlight my commitment to ensuring that a quality 24-hour emergency social work service is available across the country. I am pleased to have secured funding for Tusla to establish this service. In my performance statement for Tusla's 2018 business plan preparations, I have asked that this important service is in place in early 2018.

Tusla has put in place a project team who are to re-organise services within an integrated national Tusla emergency service. This builds on the existing infrastructure. Key steps in the process are to put in place a national manager, have a single national contact number, provide social work advice and support on a 24 hour basis, and have a foster care service available for out of hours placements. This will also see an on-call social worker service being available to receive children removed by Gardaí under section 12, and accompany them to their identified placement. A project plan is to be developed by Tusla management.

At present, there is a 24 hour Emergency Out Of Hours phone service in place in all areas. There is a dedicated phone number for Gardaí and hospitals to access social work consultation out of hours. There are also social workers available out of hours in Cork, and in the Dublin, Wicklow and Kildare area, on a 24 hour, 7 day a week basis. Budget 2018 will enable Tusla to provide a greatly improved service, by integrating existing services, and ensuring the on-call availability of social workers throughout the country on a 24/7 basis for emergency cases. A project team has been established to implement the necessary changes.

Officials from my Department and Tusla recently visited a service that provides the out of hour supports in Northern Ireland. The service they provide differs from ours, as it is a wider service for children and adults, and is a contact point for statutory social work involvement in mental health services. It is aimed at urgent or emergency situations outside of normal office hours. This provides important lessons about access to a round the clock social work service.

In urgent situations, Gardaí must be present to access premises or to remove a child to a place of safety as social workers do not have such legal powers. For example, the decision to invoke section 12 of the Child Care Act 1991 can only be made by a member of the Garda Síochána. If a child in immediate danger, as with any other citizen, the correct course of action is to contact Gardaí without delay. Under the new emergency out of hours service, a social worker will be on-call to attend situations where a child has been removed by Gardaí as an emergency measure under section 12 of the Child Care Act.

The expanded Tusla Emergency Service will enable greater joint working between Gardaí and Tusla, which will create better outcomes and faster responses for children at immediate risk.

Mother and Baby Homes Inquiries

49. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs when the report of the expert technical group dealing with the site of the former mother and baby home at Tuam, County Galway will be brought before Cabinet; when it is expected that the report will be discussed in Dáil Éireann; if the report will be tabled for discussion before the end of the 2017 term; if not, the reason therefor; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50188/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): In June of this year I appointed a multi disciplinary team of technical experts to ensure that decisions on the future of the site of the former Mother and Baby Home in Tuam, Co. Galway would be informed

by international best practice. As I have advised the Deputy recently, I have now received the Expert Technical Group's final report. I propose to bring the report to Government shortly with a view to its publication. To assist me in this regard I have sought the advices of the Attorney General and my Department is consulting with relevant Departments and agencies in relation to the practical issues which will arise upon publication.

The Expert Group's preliminary report outlines the range of options which could be considered as next steps on this site. I published this report on my Department's website in July. The Expert Group's final report fully explores each of 5 options, including the feasibility of delivery and what outcomes might reasonably be expected for this specific site. These options range from the least technical to the most complex responses which are feasible at this site.

My primary concern is to ensure that whatever action is taken respects the memory and dignity of the deceased children who lived their short lives in this institution. The report will be published to support efforts to build towards a consensus and I can assure the Deputy that consultations will take place with stakeholders before any decisions are made on the future of the site. I am of course willing to discuss this report in the House at a suitable opportunity. However, I would suggest that such discussion would benefit from first allowing those most centrally involved an opportunity to read the report and have their say.

Early Childhood Care and Education

50. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if the necessary capacity exists within the preschool sector in 2018 to provide a space for all those that want a place in County Cork in view of the entitlement to the early childhood care and education scheme will increase from 61 to 76 weeks; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50191/17]

62. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the demand for places under the early childhood care and education scheme in County Cork; the way in which deficits will be addressed; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50192/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I propose to take Questions Nos. 50 and 62 together.

My Department has conducted an analysis of ECCE capacity and is satisfied that there will be no shortfall in ECCE places for the 2017-2018 programme year. ECCE providers have catered for over 120,000 children for this programme year and while there can be pressures in some immediate localities; all eligible children have been catered for. We are working closely with the local CCC's and to date there is no reported shortage of places in County Cork.

Further, from September 2018, the ECCE Programme will revert to one single entry point in a given ECCE Programme Year (i.e. September) with eligible children entitled to two full years of ECCE provision. From September 2018, the number of ECCE enrolments in any given year will be around 114,000. Given that 120,000 places were filled in April 2017, there should be no capacity issues for the 114,000 expected to register for ECCE, for as long as 2 years, from September 2018.

Towards assisting in alleviating pressures with regard to availability of ECCE places in certain areas, my Department provided €8.4 million for its 2017 Early Years Capital funding programme. This represents a doubling of the €4m provided under the 2016 Early Years Capital.

Question No. 51 answered with Question No. 47.

Affordable Childcare Scheme Implementation

52. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the status of the legislative and ICT infrastructure that will be required to deliver the single affordable childcare scheme; the date by which this will be delivered; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50219/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Budget 2017 announced a radical redesign of how we deliver support to make quality childcare accessible and affordable for families in Ireland. The new Affordable Childcare Scheme (ACS) will provide financial support for parents towards the cost of childcare. This new Scheme will replace the existing targeted childcare programmes with a single, streamlined and more user-friendly scheme and will include “wraparound” care for pre-school and school-age children. The ambition of this project is immense; its scope matched only in size by its complexity. This scheme aims to reduce poverty, facilitate labour activation, improve outcomes for children and tangibly reduce the cost of childcare for tens of thousands of families.

My Department is currently putting in place the legal and technical infrastructures to underpin the Affordable Childcare Scheme. I am delighted to report that draft legislation to give our new approach a legal backbone is well advanced and publication of a draft Bill is expected before the end of the year.

The building of a state of the art IT system to make subsidised childcare more accessible is also being advanced. The IT development is subject to scrutiny by a peer review group (PRG) at the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO). The project has passed the first stage of the peer review process (reviewing the Business Case) and is close to completing the second stage (Request for Tender Stage).

Whilst delivering the scheme as soon as possible remains a priority, I believe that it is prudent to ensure we get the new systems right, so that they operate smoothly for everyone. Accordingly, in progressing our work, we strive to meet the highest standards available and avoid mistakes made on previous government IT projects. In doing so, we have committed ourselves to extensive consultation and peer review processes.

While intensive work is underway, the project is heavily dependent on timelines beyond its immediate control, such as the advancement of legislation through the Oireachtas. In particular, the timeframe is dependent upon ICT development. Once we have completed the Request for Tender element of the project and have the successful developer in place, we will be able to confirm and communicate a timeline for the full introduction of the scheme. Until then, I am not in a position to make a commitment on the exact launch date of ACS.

We are well on our way to introducing the Affordable Childcare Scheme. In the meantime, the families of 64,000 children or 91% of the children eligible for the measures introduced by my Department are already benefiting from financial support for their childcare, on a par with what will be delivered under the new scheme. This number is increasing daily.

Direct Provision System

53. **Deputy Michael Harty** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs her views on whether the lives of children in direct provision have improved since April 2017 when the chil-

dren's Ombudsman began accepting complaints from children or on behalf of children living in these centres; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50190/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I can inform the Deputy that, in my opinion, the lives of children living in Direct Provision improved significantly when it was confirmed that the Ombudsman for Children had remit to receive complaints from them and on their behalf. Even if no complaint is ever made, the ability to make a complaint to the Ombudsman or Ombudsman for Children is a key right of a child or a parent in respect of a service being received by the State. The previous exclusion of people in Direct Provision from making such a complaint was wrong in my view and I am glad that such an exclusion no longer exists.

The Ombudsman for Children has statutory independence in the exercise of his functions under the Ombudsman for Children Act 2002. I am aware that significant work has been done by the Ombudsman for Children's Office, the OCO, as part of this expanded remit. I understand that since April 2017 the OCO has visited every Direct Provision centre and Emergency Reception and Orientation Centre in the country where children and young people under 18 reside. This was primarily to raise awareness and understanding of the OCO's role to examine and investigate complaints. It is important that both residents and service providers are aware of the role of the Ombudsman for Children.

I am also aware that, in the context of its complementary statutory function to promote children's rights and welfare, the OCO is delivering workshops on children's rights for children living in Direct Provision. These workshops have been delivered in 9 Direct Provision centres since September 2017 and I understand that the OCO is planning to deliver further such workshops during 2018.

My Department was represented on the Working Group on the Protection Process that was chaired by Judge Bryan McMahon that published its report in June 2015. One of that Group's recommendations was that the remit of the Ombudsman and the Ombudsman for Children should be extended to complaints relating to services to residents of direct provision accommodation centres and to transfer decisions following breach of rules.

Officials in my Department also assisted the Department of Justice and Equality in consulting with children in Direct Provision centres on what they thought about their lives in these places. The Deputy will be aware of my strong belief in the value of seeking the views of children and young people on matters that affect them. I recently launched the Hub na NÓg to serve as a resource to assist government departments and other bodies with such consultations.

At present, officials in my Department are working with the Department of Justice and Equality to develop standards for the governance and management of Direct Provision centres.

I believe all of these measures have and will improve the lives of children in these centres. However, I believe the real improvement will come in improvements to the processing of applications that will minimise the time spent by children and families in Direct Provision.

Child Detention Centres

54. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs her plans to ensure that mental health needs at Oberstown children detention campus are being met in view of data collected by the centre relating to over 55% of detainees described as having a mental health need; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50173/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): My paramount objective for Oberstown is the safety, care and well-being of all young people detained there. While each young person is in Oberstown the aim is to provide best care, education and therapy programmes that will support their reintegration into the community through the development of individual and comprehensive placement plans.

The so-called “CEHOP” framework supports the journey through care of each child through planning and co-operation of all agencies addressing Care, Education, Health, Offending Behaviour and Preparing for Release of young people across the campus. The Irish Youth Justice Service and Tusla have together developed a multi-disciplinary clinical service for children in special care and detention. The provision of the Assessment, Consultation and Therapy Service, known as ACTS, commenced in 2013 and has continued for young people in Oberstown during 2017.

The Massachusetts Youth Screening Instrument (MAYSI-2) mental health screening takes place on all children entering detention to gauge the level of risk they may pose to themselves. The multi-disciplinary ACTS team consider this information and make clinical decisions about the need for clinical interventions.

The ACTS include psychologists, social workers, speech and language therapists and addiction counsellors. The role of the service is to provide specialist assessment or intervention from specialists within the clinical team to young people in need of services. Provision of an in-reach psychiatric service is also provided through the Health Service Executive (HSE). Currently there is a psychiatrist and psychiatric nurse available to Oberstown who works in a collaborative way with other services on the Campus.

ACTS also engages in short term interventions, when children return to their communities, to support them to re-engage with mainstream services, as appropriate. The service is flexible in that, as children move between placements, it continues to provide clinical services.

ACTS supports professionals in their ongoing work with young people and also liaises with services to facilitate the continuation of ongoing therapeutic work when the young person’s detention ends.

Youth Services Provision

55. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the degree to which her Department continues to liaise with youth organisations with a view to identifying their concerns and putting in place measures to address issues arising; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50212/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): My Department maintains close contact with the national youth organisations and I and officials from my Department meet formally with these organisations twice a year to share knowledge and information on developments in the youth sector. A separate meeting is held on that day with the five national organisations in receipt of targeted youth funding to keep them updated on the ongoing work on the Value for Money and Policy Review reforms. My Department has commenced a process with national youth organisations and local services to identify service development needs for 2018.

Youth Officers of the Education and Training Boards provide an important support role to my Department in the co-ordination and administration of youth services at local level across the country. In order to keep my Department informed of their ongoing work, officials hold

quarterly meetings attended by all Youth Officers from across the country. These meetings assist my Department in identifying service needs, particularly for vulnerable young people. Recently the Youth Affairs Unit of my Department set up a working group with five Youth Officers focussed on strategic planning for future capital funding for the youth sector.

My Department holds quarterly meetings with Youth Work Ireland regarding the important work of this organisation. My officials have also recently attended a meeting of Youth Work Ireland Regional Directors and were pleased to accept an invitation to attend this meeting twice a year from now on. There is also ongoing active engagement between my Department and the youth constituency of the of the Better Outcomes Brighter Futures Advisory Council. A number of national youth organisations are members of this Council.

Officials from the Youth Affairs Unit are engaged with programmes run by the National Youth Council of Ireland such as the Youth Arts Strategic Review and Plan Advisory Steering Group and the National Health Programme Strategic Planning Working Group, both of which receive funding from my Department.

Officials from my Department also meet with youth organisations on an individual basis when the need arises.

Child Detention Centres

56. **Deputy Denise Mitchell** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs her plans to introduce a legal framework governing the use of single separation at Oberstown children detention campus. [50169/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): In light of the developments and improvements detailed below regarding the use and monitoring of single separation, I have no plans to introduce a legal framework governing its use.

In January 2017 my Department published A National Policy on Single Separation Use in Secure Accommodation for Children: Special Care and Oberstown. It is my Department's policy that the use of Single Separation shall be a measure of last resort. Following my Department's publication Oberstown carried out a review of its Single Separation Policy. The revised Single Separation Policy for Oberstown, was approved by the Oberstown Board of Management in April 2017.

Arising from this review, the separation procedures are being reviewed and revised in line with the new policy. All staff are receiving refresher training on the policy and will receive training on the procedures once completed.

The number of separations that take place and the recording of what is deemed to be separation in line with the stated policy is a matter of concern which has emerged in the most recent HIQA inspection report. Under the current HIQA Action Plan for Oberstown, a process to ensure that unit managers monitor single separation records was established by the Deputy Director for Care Services and implementation of this process is the responsibility of the Deputy Director for Residential Services. Record keeping on the use of single separation and other restrictive practices have been further informed by an audit review undertaken by the Deputy Director for Care Services. Direction has been provided to all unit managers on the requirements to ensure that all staff comply with campus procedures and policies. Further monitoring of the records will be undertaken by Oberstown management and specific audits have been scheduled to be carried out by the end of 2017.

There is now a process in place to ensure that any extensions to the use of separation comply with these policies and procedures. This process includes the availability of senior management on a 24/7 basis to approve the use of separation, following a risk assessment, in specific instances.

Youth Work Projects Funding

57. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs her plans to increase the funding for youth work projects in County Laois in view of the growing young population. [50223/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Laois Youth Services received €86,803 in funding in 2017 under the Special Projects for Youth scheme. Under this Scheme, grant-aid is made available in respect of out-of-school projects for disadvantaged young people. Priority is given to projects in the spheres of special youth work initiatives, young homeless people, young people at risk of substance abuse and young travellers. Funding to staff-led youth services has generally been targeted at areas of disadvantage and not in proportion to the youth population of a county.

In addition, funding has been provided to Laois Offaly Education and Training Board under the Local Youth Club Grant Scheme, Youth Capital Funding Scheme and the Local Youth Club Equipment Scheme.

The Deputy may be aware that my Department is managing the most significant reform of youth services ever undertaken. This will provide an opportunity to identify need and to focus funding on young people most in need of intervention.

Under this reform earlier this year, I approved funding of €800,000 for the establishment of new youth projects and for the augmentation of a small number of existing youth services to meet new challenges arising from population increases. An application in respect of Laois was, unfortunately, not successful. However I would encourage further applications in respect of Laois for any funding that becomes available.

Future development and investment in youth services will be informed by the recently completed exercise which mapped youth service provision across the State. This mapping will assist the Department and the relevant ETB in developing a detailed social demographic profile in terms of both population numbers and deprivation levels. My Department is committed to working with Laois and Offaly ETB to identify need and explore ways to address this need where it emerges.

Affordable Childcare Scheme

58. **Deputy Kate O'Connell** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if the issue of Tusla registered child care services not taking part in the affordable childcare scheme has been addressed; if so, the measures that have been taken; if she has a record of the participating childcare providers; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [49853/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I am delighted to state that as of November 22th, 3,274 services have signed up for the more affordable childcare measures I introduced in September 2017. This represents approximately 88% of Early Years services which provide non ECCE services. This number continues to rise and applica-

tions from providers wishing to provide these subsidies will continue to be accepted for the duration of the programme year.

A record of all participating providers is maintained by Pobal, which operates the Early Years schemes on behalf of DCYA. The 30 City and County Childcare Committees are also aware of services that have contracted and have offered information and support to outstanding services to enable them to sign up over the remainder of the programme year if they so choose.

I am delighted to state that the families of over 64,000 children are benefitting from these increased childcare supports, and the figure continues to rise on a daily basis. 30,000 children are receiving the Universal Payment, which amounts to as much as €1,040 per child under 3, per annum. 34,000 children, from families who need supports the most, are also receiving up to €145 per child, per week. The 64,000 children already represents 91% of the numbers we had estimated and, as I said before, continues to rise on a daily basis.

To respond to providers that had expressed concerns around the administration of these new measures, I recently announced payments totalling €3.5 million for all childcare providers who register for the enhanced childcare measures. These payments will be made in the coming weeks. This, in addition to €14.5m that has already been paid to childcare services in 2017, is in recognition of the administration associated with the schemes. This brings the total funding provided to support the administration of the schemes to €18 million in 2017.

Mental Health Services

59. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the status of the working group involving the HSE, the Department of Health and Tusla co-ordinating a focus for the State's provision of mental health services for young persons; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50146/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): My officials, in collaboration with colleagues in the Department of Health, are currently identifying a date in December for the inaugural meeting of this group. It is envisaged that this group will comprise of representatives from the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, Department of Health, Health Service Executive and Tusla.

The key objective of the working group is to examine the psychological and mental health services for children and young people with the aim of ascertaining a clear continuum of provision, strengthening alignment and areas for improvement, centered on the needs of children and young people.

It is expected that the working group will meet bimonthly.

Question No. 60 answered with Question No. 45.

Family Resource Centres

61. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs her plans to review the funding structure of existing family resource centres as part of the Tusla business plan for 2018 in order to address previous funding reductions and differences in the funding structures between new and existing centres; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50213/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I am placing a strong emphasis on family support services next year, and the development of capacity within the Family Resource Centre Programme.

Tusla, the Child and Family Agency currently allocates funding to 109 Family Resource Centres. This funding provides a contribution towards the running costs of centres.

In 2018, I am providing Tusla with additional funding of almost €3.0m for the Family Resource Centre Programme. This will allow for at least 11 new centres to be included in the Programme and also provides for increases in funding to existing centres next year.

I am doing this in recognition of the importance of early intervention and prevention in assisting vulnerable children and families in our local communities.

Decisions by Tusla in relation to the funding of individual centres will have regard to the location, size and catchment area of each centre.

In conclusion, I would like to acknowledge the valuable work of Family Resource Centres. I am pleased that I have secured additional resources to support them in their work with vulnerable children and families in our local communities.

Question No. 62 answered with Question No. 50.

School Completion Programme

63. **Deputy Denise Mitchell** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the funding allocated for the school completion programme; if the funding is sufficient to meet demand; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50170/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The total budget allocated to the School Completion Programme (SCP) in 2017 is €24.72m and my Department is currently working with the Educational Welfare Service of Tusla in relation to 2018 allocations. Under the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) Plan 2017 a number of new schools are now included and will be joining the SCP from September 2018. In this regard it is anticipated that the provision of SCP supports in additional schools will require further resources to be made available to the SCP from 2018 onwards.

The School Completion Programme is a core element of the Educational Welfare Service provided by Tusla and I believe it is a crucial service for children, parents and schools. The SCP is a targeted fund which seeks to meet the needs of young people most at risk of early school leaving. The SCP aims to drive consistent improvement in the rates of school completion. It does this through the use of evidence based interventions to maintain vulnerable young people in mainstream education and to support young people who have dropped out of formal education to re-engage with learning.

The School Completion Programme is critical to ensuring that children who are most at risk of early school leaving are supported to stay in education. The further development of the School Completion Programme deserves careful reflection and analysis to ensure that it achieves the outcomes required. I also need ensure that services under the Programme are compliant with financial and governance rules, and that we have the best possible model of service delivery throughout the country. To this end, I am currently examining recommendations from the Educational Welfare Service of Tusla as to how best to strengthen and improve the Programme.

Cyber Security Policy

64. **Deputy Denise Mitchell** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the steps being taken to ensure young persons' cyber safety and her plans to publish a national strategy on children's cyber safety. [50172/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Protecting children from online abuse, bullying and grooming requires a whole of government approach. The devastating effects are becoming increasingly obvious in our homes, schools and communities.

While my department does not have a lead responsibility in this area, it does play an important role in a wider range of actions across a number of departments.

Last week, I met with the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment, Denis Naughten and the Minister for Justice and Equality, Charlie Flanagan, to discuss the cross-Government collaboration that is needed. A lot of work is being done by individual departments. However we need to develop an action plan involving all relevant departments to ensure that our actions are coordinated, complementary and robust. It is our intention to include the Minister for Health and the Minister for Education in the development of the action plan.

I am commencing all remaining provisions of the Children First Act 2015 on 11 December, 2017. The ongoing role of the statutory Children First Interdepartmental Implementation Group, which is chaired by my Department, is to ensure consistent implementation of the provisions of the Children First Act and Guidance across Government Departments, the HSE, the Gardaí and Tusla. Issues in relation to internet safety which have a child protection dimension and which require cross-Government collaboration or support can be raised in the context of the Group.

The National Youth Health Programme is a partnership between the HSE, the National Youth Council of Ireland and my Department. It aims to provide a broad based, flexible health promotion / education support and training service, to youth organisations and to all those working with young people in out-of-school settings. The 'Web Safety in Youth Work' resource, available on the National Youth Council's website, provides valuable advice to young people on reporting online behaviour and on passing on concerns about the protection and welfare of a child or young person.

Combatting online child grooming is a matter for my colleague the Minister for Justice and Equality, and is addressed as part of a wide-ranging package of measures aimed at the reform of Ireland's criminal law on sexual offences, set out in the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act, 2017. The Office for Internet Safety, an executive office of the Department of Justice and Equality, was established by the Government to take a lead responsibility for internet safety in Ireland, particularly as it relates to children.

In seeking to address the problem of bullying in all its forms we must tackle its root causes. This includes a focus on tackling prejudice, including homophobia, where it exists in our schools and wider society. My Department is currently developing an LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy, which is the first of its kind in the world and also makes a contribution towards the Government's broader commitment to continue to strive for full inclusion of LGBTI+ people in Ireland.

The implementation of the Action Plan on Bullying, which is being led by the Department of Education and Skills, provides the framework for the Government's absolute commitment to working with a broad base of interests to protect children from bullying and the often devastating consequences that it can have.

Questions - Written Answers
Child Detention Centres

65. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she is satisfied that the difficulties in Oberstown house are being resolved satisfactorily; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50194/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The safety and well-being of young people and staff in Oberstown is my primary concern.

In addressing the challenges posed by the issues on the Oberstown Children Detention Campus (Oberstown), the Board of Management commissioned independent reviews in a number of key areas including operations, security, health and safety and behaviour management. In addition, all policies are being reviewed especially in the areas of care, safeguarding and professional standards on the Campus.

There were a number of objectives for these reviews. Key among these is to ensure that full account is taken of the changes that have occurred in recent times. A further objective is to ensure that the optimum care and attention continues to be given to children residing in Oberstown. Essential to this is ensuring that the people working in Oberstown are supported through good organisation, training and development.

To ensure the implementation of each of the reviews' recommendations, as appropriate, I established a Review Implementation Group in March 2017. This Implementation Group is tasked with analysing the recommendations from the reviews and setting out the requirements and issues which require to be addressed to allow their implementation highlighting resources and policy implications. The Group includes representatives from Campus staff and management, the Board of Management, my Department, a child development expert, representatives of the IMPACT Trade Union and is chaired by the chair of the Board of Management. The Implementation Group is tasked with analysing the recommendations from the Operational Review, as well as the Security Review, Behavioural Management Review and the two Health and Safety Reviews. Work processing all of the recommendations from the reviews has been ongoing since March 2017. In line with the terms of reference, a final report setting out the requirements and issues that need to be addressed to allow their implementation is currently being finalised and I understand it is to be presented to me in December 2017. Many of the recommendations have already been implemented or are works in progress.

My paramount objective for Oberstown is the safety and well-being of the children, the staff working in Oberstown and the people living in the local community. I believe that good progress has been made and the implementation of the recommendations of the 4 review reports will bring about further improvements.

School Completion Programme

66. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if her attention has been drawn to the fact that the schools taking part in the school completion programme have been asked to cut the number of students down to 10% of the current number of students they are working with; her views on whether the consequences of this decision will prove to be detrimental to many students' educational development; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [45002/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Schools participating in the School Completion Programme have not been asked to cut the numbers of students

they are working with down to 10% of current numbers.

Schools have however been asked to ensure that the School Completion Programme funding is focused on achieving its primary purpose, that is, to target those children most at risk of early school leaving. Ireland's school completion rates have improved significantly over the years, but those children who remain at risk of early school leaving often now require intensive, highly customised interventions to support them to stay in school.

This year Tusla has asked School Completion Programme projects to identify the children most at risk and to provide the range of interventions these children require. In some instances this may reduce the number of children attending the School Completion Programme activities, but it should deliver better outcomes for vulnerable children most in need of the Programme.

To assist schools and projects with this new focus on high-risk children, a working group of SCP Coordinators and Tusla Educational Welfare staff developed a revised Annual School Retention Plan. Through this Plan, schools and projects can set out the universal and targeted measures they hope to use to meet the needs of their children.

The School Completion Programme is a core element of the Educational Welfare Service provided by Tusla and I believe it is a crucial service for children, parents and schools. I am committed to working with Tusla to see this important programme developed to its optimum.

Departmental Reports

67. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs her role and involvement in the work leading from the Mulvey report on Dublin's north inner city in the area of child care; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50195/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): My Department is very actively involved in the North East Inner City Initiative which is progressing apace on foot of the Mulvey Report. Officials from my Department are represented on the Senior Officials Oversight Group and the Programme Implementation Board. The Department of Children and Youth Affairs is also Chairing the Integrating Social Services subgroup under this initiative.

My Department is working to enhance alignment of existing initiatives in the North East Inner City as well as the development of other responses which add value to the actions of the Mulvey Report. This will achieve maximum impact in terms of integrating service delivery and impact relating to children, young people and their families.

One of the outcomes in the Mulvey Report Action Plan is that local Early Years providers should implement the Síolta and Aistear frameworks. My Department, along with the Department of Education and Skills, has a key role to play in that respect.

The implementation of Síolta and Aistear by early years services in the area is being supported by the Better Start quality development service and by the National Síolta Aistear Initiative. This is being done in collaboration with City and County Childcare Committees, National Voluntary Childcare Organisations.

Eight services in the North East Inner City have engaged with the Better Start quality development service to access mentoring supports. Of these, three have completed a programme of support, four are currently receiving mentoring supports and a further service has not yet started the programme. A further five services in neighbouring areas which are likely to have children from the North East Inner City attending have engaged with the Better Start service. Of these,

two have completed the programme, two are currently in the programme and one has not yet started.

Alongside the Better Start quality development service, the National Síolta Aistear Initiative has provided training and resources to City and County Childcare Committees to support the implementation of the curriculum and quality frameworks. Dublin City Childcare Committee which provides supports to services in the North East Inner City has two members of staff trained as Síolta Aistear mentors who offer training, mentoring and coaching supports focused on supporting the implementation of Síolta and Aistear.

My Department will continue in 2018 to progress the actions in the Mulvey Report including those that relate to childcare to ensure that services and facilities are providing for the needs of the children and families in the North East Inner City.

Child Detention Centres

68. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs her views on the findings of the HIQA inspection of Oberstown children detention campus in regard to the concerns raised regarding periods of prolonged isolation; and the way in which she plans to address these concerns in order to safeguard the wellbeing of the children detained there. [50174/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): In March 2017 the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) undertook an inspection at Oberstown Children Detention Campus. A number of areas which require improvement were identified. An Action Plan to address these areas was agreed between HIQA and Oberstown and published on the HIQA website. I understand that work in this regard is progressing in line with the timetable agreed in the Action Plan.

I very much welcome the comprehensive Action Plan to address those areas identified by HIQA that require improvement, and I will keep the implementation of this Plan under review.

I think it is important to point out that the HIQA report also identified a number of positive improvements at the Campus since the previous report. These include access by children to advocates; that children knew how to make a complaint and children now have a greater voice over the choice of activities on the campus.

HIQA raised issues in the most recent Report and in previous reports in relation to single separation and the recording of same. It is my Department's policy that the use of any restrictive practice should only be a measure of last resort and as part of a continuum of planned interventions. The decision to separate a young person must at all times be a proportionate response to the risk posed by the young person.

After the publication of my Department's national policy on single separation in January 2017, a review of the Separation Policy for Oberstown took place, and the Oberstown Board of Management approved the revised Single Separation Policy in April 2017. Arising from this review, the separation procedures are also being reviewed and revised in line with the new policy. All staff are receiving refresher training on the revised policy and will receive training on the revised operational procedures also.

An improved system of record keeping on the use of single separation has been further informed by an audit review that looked at staff compliance with campus procedures and policies. In order to ensure compliance with procedures senior management must sign off on periods of separation and, following risk assessments, any reviews for an extension. This process

has been strengthened by making senior management available to front line staff on a 24/7 basis to sanction the initiation or extension of a period of separation.

Children who are remanded or sentenced at Oberstown have multiple complex needs and vulnerabilities. Providing an ethos of care for children with such complex needs is essential in the safeguarding of children in detention on the Oberstown Campus.

Cyberbullying Issues

69. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs her role in protecting children from online bullying, abuse and grooming; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50217/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I refer the Deputy to the reply that I provided to the same question that she asked as a Priority Question today.

Child Protection

70. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the progress made to address the issues raised in the special rapporteur on child protection's report on child protection processes and procedures of An Garda Síochána. [50183/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I understand that the Deputy is referring to the stand alone report commissioned by the Garda Síochána which was published as "Audit of the exercise by An Garda Síochána of the provisions of Section 12 of the Child Care Act 1991". I am happy to report that progress is being made across all 15 actions of the plan I put in place to address the issues raised in the report commissioned by the Garda Síochána into the use of section 12 of the Child Care Act 1991, as amended. The Strategic Liaison Committee, referred to below, is a high level forum between An Garda Síochána and Tusla which facilitates liaison on inter-agency matters. The current status of the recommendations is as follows:

- Recommendation 6.3.1 - Cultural change is being addressed by means of regular meetings by senior managers in the Garda Síochána and Tusla. The Strategic Liaison Committee, attended by senior representatives of Tusla and the Gardaí meets quarterly.

- Recommendations 6.3.3 and 6.3.14 - the assessment of needs and provision of supports for families and children are being addressed through Tusla's roll out of a new single national approach to child protection from November 2017 on. The "Signs of Safety" approach will help ensure appropriate supports and interventions are in place for families.

- Recommendation 6.3.5 - Substance misuse issues as a key indicator of risk: I have written to my colleague, the Minister for Health, bringing the concerns highlighted in the report about alcohol and substance misuse, and about children's mental health issues to his attention. It is noted that the Signs of Safety approach will continue to include parental use of drugs and alcohol as a core part of child assessment

- Recommendation 6.3.6 Data protection: The Strategic Liaison Committee is planning to bring any actions or legislative change to the attention of myself and Minister Flanagan at the start of 2018.

- Recommendation 6.3.7 - Protocols to support the commencement of the Children First

Act 2015: A protocol between An Garda Síochána and Tusla is being finalised in advance of the commencement of the remaining provisions of the Children First Act 2015.

- Recommendation 6.3.13 - Assigning social workers to national specialist Garda child protection units: The Garda National Child Protection Unit has now been established. A senior staff member from Tusla has been working within the unit on an informal basis for some time and this position can now be formalised.

- Recommendation 6.3.14 - Appropriate assessment of the child's needs, including the child's mental health: My Department has written to the Departments of Health and Education in relation to the medical, educational and emotional needs of children subject to an emergency child protection action. My Department has also written to Tusla and the Strategic Liaison Committee to seek confirmation on the issue of impact and trauma, noting that Tusla's Signs of Safety approach to practice provides an appropriate, proportionate, and timely response to children 'at risk/in need'.

- Recommendation 6.3.17.1 - Delegation of Tusla's role under section 12: Tusla indicates that it was never the case that its role was implemented by a private provider. This is and has been exercised by Tusla. The private provider was contracted to make sure there were placements available to Tusla in these cases.

- Recommendation 6.3.17.2 - Use of foster placements and applicability of section 36(1) (b) of the Act: Tusla notes that a child received under section 12 is not in care but is in Tusla's custody. Tusla provides foster placements under section 15 of the Act that provides for accommodation of children for the purposes of part 3 of the Act (Protection of Children in Emergencies), which includes section 12.

- Recommendation 6.3.17.3 - Applicability of Child Care Act and regulations to foster care providers used to provide accommodation in urgent or emergency cases: Tusla have confirmed that the standards and regulatory obligations applicable to foster care generally are also applicable to foster care placements on an emergency basis - be that private provider or otherwise.

- Recommendation 6.3.17.4 - Standards to be applied for foster placements used under Part 3 Protection of Children in Emergencies of the Child Care Act 1991: Irrespective of the pathway into Tusla's care, a placement with a private provider is subject to relevant standards. Private providers are inspected by HIQA under national standards.

- Recommendation 6.3.17.5 - Social work service to be provided out of normal office hours: Tusla's immediate plan to enhance the out of hours service includes the integration of the three existing out of hours services into one national service. The Minister has secured funding in Budget 2018 and has asked Tusla to progress this project in early 2018.

I would note that research into the use of emergency care orders, under section 13 of the Child Care Act, is also progressing with Tusla.

As the Deputy may be aware, a member of the Garda Síochána has the power to enter a premises and remove a child to a place of safety if they have formed the view that there is immediate risk to the child and there is insufficient time to seek an emergency care order through the Courts.

Child Care Services Staff

71. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs further

to Parliamentary Question No. 71 of 17 October 2017, if a child care facility (details supplied) will be supported. [50193/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): My Department made €1m of ‘CE Sustainability Funding’ available in 2017 to support services that had been impacted by staff qualification requirements in the 2016 Regulations. This funding was designed to ensure that these regulatory changes did not hinder service delivery or the availability of childcare places.

Services were required to satisfy certain criteria to avail of this funding. The criteria required that the service was providing at least one of the DCYA childcare schemes over the January to August 2017 period. Unfortunately the service in question was not operating any State funded schemes during this time, and therefore would not have qualified for the funding had it applied. I would also note that the application window for this funding closed on the 10th of November.

I am aware that the service has received support from both Pobal and its local Childcare Committee, and has recently registered for a number of childcare schemes funded by my Department.

I hope this funding will be of value to the service and assist it in the important work it does in challenging circumstances.

I am very conscious of sustainability challenges faced by many community/not for profit childcare services across the country. I am committed to continuing to seek additional investment to support them. My officials are currently developing policy priorities in respect of the €1.7m of Sustainability Funding I secured in Budget 2018, which I hope will again be of assistance to many services.

Foster Care Supports

72. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the complaints and appeals mechanisms that are in place for foster care parents that feel that they or their foster child have been treated unfairly or inappropriately by Tusla; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50220/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): In serving the best interest of the child, it is vital that the voices of foster carers and children in care are heard.

Foster carers can raise any issue or provide feedback directly with their link worker in the first instance, and subsequently with team leader or principal social worker, and they may also make representations to their Foster Care Committee. In addition, foster carers can make use of the Tusla, the Child and Family Agency feedback and complaints mechanism, “Tell Us”. All foster carers may also submit a complaint to the Office of the Ombudsman if these mechanisms prove unsatisfactory.

A complaints system for children in care is part of the National Standards for Foster Care. Children coming into care are informed of how to make a complaint, verbally or in writing, and of their right to do so. This can be done directly with their social worker, or with the team leader or principal social worker. Alternatively, children in care can also use Tusla’s “Tell us” process or make their complaint known to the Ombudsman for Children. The child’s social worker, foster carers or advocacy groups often act on the child’s behalf and provide support in making their views known. For example, Empowering People in Care (EPIC) is an independent organisation which works with and advocates on behalf of children and young people in care.

In addition, the Irish Foster Care Association (IFCA) independently advocates on behalf of foster carers, providing support and mediation services as needed in the event of differences that may arise. This includes a support helpline, funded by Tusla, which is available to all foster carers.

Child and Family Agency

73. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the extent to which reports of children at risk of mental, physical or sexual abuse have been brought to the attention of her Department by various bodies under its aegis; the extent to which the services have been able to address the issues raised within a reasonable timeframe and in a satisfactory fashion; if deficiencies in the system have been identified; if corrective measures are required; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50211/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I wish to assure the Deputy that Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, deals immediately with emergency cases, including for instance, if a child is in immediate physical danger or at immediate risk of sexual abuse. Social work duty teams keep high priority cases under review by regularly checking to ascertain risk to the child, and where necessary will reprioritise the case.

Tusla holds the statutory responsibility for child welfare and protection, and is the appropriate body to receive reports of concerns relating to children at risk. Each referral received by the Agency is assessed and dealt with on an individual basis by the relevant social work team. Every report of concern for the safety and well-being of a child is assessed and required action is identified. Preliminary screening is aimed at establishing the appropriateness of the referral to Tusla services and, if necessary, is followed by an initial assessment of the concern to determine the best course of action for the child and its family.

A number of key provisions of the Children First Act, 2015, have already commenced. On the 11th December the remaining parts of the Children First Act, 2015, will be commenced with the introduction of mandatory reporting by key professionals, mandated assisting, comprehensive risk assessment and the preparation of Child Safeguarding Statements by services for children. Tusla has developed online training for mandatory reporters. Children First guidelines will continue in parallel with the Act. This sets out the roles and responsibilities for all citizens to report child welfare and protection issues to Tusla, and where criminal matters are involved, An Garda Síochána.

I believe that we have made significant progress in our structures and practices for child protection. The Children First Act, 2015, is of particular significance, but I would see it as part of a suite of child protection legislation that includes the Acts relating to the National Vetting Bureau and the Withholding of Information on Offences against Children and Vulnerable Persons.

There is no room for complacency about our safeguarding measures and we will constantly review them to ensure that they are effective.

Tusla works closely with other care providers, including the Health Service Executive, in respect of access to primary care services, child and adolescent mental health services, disability and other services. Tusla and the HSE monitor their interagency relationship to ensure that they are working effectively in the best interests of children and families.

Early Childhood Care and Education

74. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the steps she is taking to address the considerable shortages in ECCE places that exist in certain parts of the country; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50216/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): My Department has conducted an analysis of ECCE capacity and is satisfied that there will be no shortfall in ECCE places for the 2017/2018 programme year.

It should be noted that the peak number of children attending ECCE in 2016/2017 was just over 120,000. The 2017/2018 numbers are expected (and on track) to be in line with 2016/2017 uptake. Further, from September 2018, the ECCE Programme will revert to one single entry point in a given ECCE Programme Year (i.e. September) with eligible children entitled to two full years of ECCE provision. From September 2018, the number of ECCE enrolments in any given year will be around 114,000. The fact that 120,000 children were provided with ECCE places in April 2017 suggests that there is sufficient capacity to deal with the lower, be it all year round, number of 114,000.

As with the previous expansion of the ECCE programme, my Department is working closing with all of the City and County Childcare Committees to monitor a range of scheme related issues, including capacity. In the event that capacity issues emerge, we will seek to address these accordingly.

Recent media statements on this issue cited the total number of children aged 3-5 in the population and concluded that there was a capacity issue for ECCE. This did not account for the many 4 and 5 year olds already in primary school, nor those who opt for only one year of the ECCE Programme. The conclusion that a capacity issue exists is therefore inaccurate.

One of the measures I took in 2016, and again in 2017, was to support capital development. My Department provided €8.4million for its 2017 Early Years Capital funding programme and €4m for the 2016 Early Years Capital Funding Programme. The 2017 funding was made available to providers under three strands, the largest of which (€4.2m) went towards enabling services to provide additional childcare places. I will be announcing details of the 2018 Capital scheme in the very near future.

Adoption Records Provision

75. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the steps being taken to address access to adoption records for persons that spent time in mother and baby homes; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50187/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Adoption information and tracing services are currently provided on an administrative basis by Tusla, the Adoption Authority of Ireland and by bodies that have been accredited by the Authority under the Adoption Act 2010, depending on who holds the records in question. I am aware that some people are trying to find out if and when they were in a particular mother and baby home irrespective of an adoption having taken place. My Department has engaged with Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, on this issue and the Agency has the resources to help former residents get access to relevant information.

The Adoption (Information and Tracing) Bill 2016 provides for the first time a statutory entitlement to identity information for adopted persons. It provides for a structured and regulated access to information and tracing services for those affected by adoption. It sets out the information that can be provided and the circumstances in which it can be provided to adopted per-

sons and provides that services will be provided by Tusla. A key provision in the Bill provides that an adopted person aged 18 years or over who was adopted prior to commencement of the Bill will be provided with the information required to apply for his or her birth certificate, subject to certain conditions. The Bill also provides for access to relevant records containing the information concerned that are held by the Authority. The Bill passed Second Stage in Seanad Eireann in May 2017 and will proceed to Committee Stage in the Seanad as soon as possible.

Small and Medium Enterprises Data

76. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Taoiseach the percentage and number of Irish SMEs active in manufacturing, by micro-sized enterprises, medium-sized enterprises and SMEs; and the equivalent figures for the EU from the latest available data, in tabular form. [49983/17]

Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach (Deputy Joe McHugh): Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) are defined as having less than 250 persons employed. In 2015, the latest year for which data is available, Ireland had 15,090 SMEs in manufacturing. The EU-28 total was 2,081,796 SMEs in manufacturing.

The following table gives a breakdown of manufacturing enterprises by size of enterprise in each EU Member State, distinguishing the number of micro-enterprises (less than 10 persons employed), small enterprises (10 to 49 persons employed), medium enterprises (50 to 249 persons employed), and large enterprises. The figures are based on EU results published by Eurostat. Irish figures for 2016 will be available in June 2018.

Number of Manufacturing Enterprises by Size Class and Member State, 2015

Size of enterprise (persons employed)

	Micro (<10)	%	Small (10-49)	%	Medium(50-249)	%	SMEs(<249)	%	Large (250 or more)	%	All Manufacturing Enterprises
EU - 281	1,735,311	82.7	275,207	13.1	71,278	3.4	2,081,796	99.2	16,100	0.8	2,098,630
Belgium	27,932	82.7	4,396	13.0	1,151	3.4	33,479	99.1	309	0.9	33,788
Bulgaria	22,785	73.8	5,697	18.4	1,743	5.6	30,225	97.9	285	0.9	30,879
Czech Republic	159,760	92.9	8,381	4.9	3,052	1.8	171,193	99.5	861	0.5	172,054
Denmark	10,523	70.9	3,149	21.2	958	6.5	14,630	98.6	202	1.4	14,832
Germany	131,323	64.1	52,905	25.8	16,464	8.0	200,692	97.9	4,336	2.1	205,028
Estonia	5,369	76.1	1,182	16.8	438	6.2	6,989	99.1	64	0.9	7,053
Ireland	13,048	85.6	1,540	10.1	502	3.3	15,090	99.0	152	1.0	15,242
Greece	59,886	93.7	3,330	5.2	563	0.9	63,779	99.8	111	0.2	63,890
Spain	139,733	83.7	22,232	13.3	4,220	2.5	166,185	99.6	752	0.5	166,936
France	184,489	86.5	21,974	10.3	5,486	2.6	211,949	99.4	1,354	0.6	213,303
Croatia	16,351	82.9	2,570	13.0	646	3.3	19,567	99.2	149	0.8	19,716
Italy	321,837	82.7	57,930	14.9	8,338	2.1	388,105	99.7	1,212	0.3	389,317
Cyprus	4,504	89.7	445	8.9	64	1.3	5,013	99.9	6	0.1	5019
Latvia	8,569	81.4	1,457	13.8	442	4.2	10,468	99.5	54	0.5	10,523
Lithuania	16,399	84.5	2,163	11.2	704	3.6	19,266	99.3	132	0.7	19,398
Luxembourg	481	61.2	..	..	83	10.6	..	..	..	..	786
Hungary	41,545	84.3	5,686	11.5	1,659	3.4	48,890	99.1	420	0.9	49,310
Malta	1,787	86.1	..	..	56	2.7	..	..	..	..	2,076
Netherlands	55,117	87.0	5,962	9.4	1,935	3.1	63,014	99.5	323	0.5	63,337
Austria	18,401	72.7	5,015	19.8	1,432	5.7	24,848	98.1	475	1.9	25,323
Poland	164,535	87.8	15,057	8.0	6,193	3.3	185,785	99.2	1,589	0.8	187,374
Portugal	54,653	81.9	9,693	14.5	2,120	3.2	66,466	99.6	263	0.4	66,729
Romania	34,974	72.3	9,509	19.6	3,147	6.5	47,630	98.4	775	1.6	48,405
Slovenia	16,700	88.6	1,562	8.3	487	2.6	18,749	99.4	104	0.6	18,853

	Micro (<10)	%	Small (10-49)	%	Medium(50-249)	%	SMEs(<249)	%	Large (250 or more)	%	All Manufacturing Enterprises
Slovakia	59,413	92.9	3,261	5.1	1014	1.6	63,688	99.6	281	0.4	63,969
Finland	16,821	81.3	2,922	14.1	825	4.0	20,568	99.5	200	1.0	20,678
Sweden	47,435	88.3	4,735	8.8	1,255	2.3	53,425	99.5	287	0.5	53,712
United Kingdom	100,941	77.0	22,454	17.1	6,301	4.8	129,696	98.9	1,404	1.1	131,100

Indicates that the data has been suppressed for confidentiality reasons.

- 1 Total values exclude data from countries whose values have been suppressed.

Enterprise Data

77. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Taoiseach the number of active enterprises, by size (details supplied) according to the latest Business In Ireland 2015 CSO data; and the corresponding number of persons engaged in each such size category. [49986/17]

Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach (Deputy Joe McHugh): The information requested by the Deputy was published by the CSO on 17 November 2017 in Table 3.1 of the Business in Ireland 2015 report. The same information is set out in a table.

Number of active enterprises and persons engaged by sector and size class, 2015

	Industry	Industry	Construction	Construction	Distribution	Distribution	Services	Services	Financial and Insurance ¹	Financial and Insurance ¹	Total Business Economy	Total Business Economy
Size Class	Active Enterprises	Persons Engaged	Active Enterprises	Persons Engaged	Active Enterprises	Persons Engaged	Active Enterprises	Persons Engaged	Active Enterprises	Persons Engaged	Active Enterprises	Persons Engaged
Micro (<10)	14,760	26,159	49,192	71,430	40,537	89,882	118,674	189,213	6,308	10,041	229,471	386,725
Small (10-49)	1,705	35,900	1,240	22,362	5,315	99,792	7,231	139,641	511	9,930	16,002	307,625
Medium (50-249)	545	56,317	101	8,898	684	61,385	1,371	135,137	128	12,794	2,829	274,531
All SMEs (<250)	17,010	118,376	50,533	102,690	46,536	251,059	127,276	463,991	6,947	32,765	248,302	968,881
Large	166	103,421	13	6,030	90	94,852	209	164,726	62	65,071	540	434,100
All sizes	17,176	221,797	50,546	108,720	46,626	345,911	127,485	628,717	7,009	97,836	248,842	1,402,981

Source: CSO Business Demography

- 1 Excludes activities of financial holding companies (K642)

Unemployment Data

78. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Taoiseach the number of young persons aged 15 to 29 years of age classified as NEETs; the percentage of NEETs as a proportion of the unemployed here; and the corresponding EU average rate. [49987/17]

Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach (Deputy Joe McHugh): The Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS) is the official source of estimates of unemployment (International Labour Organisation - ILO) in the State. The latest annual (average) unemployment data available for Ireland is for 2016.

The table provided shows, for Ireland, the number of persons between 15-29 years of age classified as, not in employment, education, or training (NEET) and the total number of those classified as NEET being unemployed (ILO) for the years 2015 and 2016. The table also includes for Ireland the percentage share of all unemployed persons aged between 15 and 29

years represented by those classified as NEET above.

The most recently available annual unemployment data for the EU28 is for 2016.

Unemployed (ILO) persons aged 15 - 29 years classified NEET, 2015 and 2016

Unemployed (ILO) persons aged 15 - 29 years	2015	2016
Total number of persons aged 15-29 years classified as NEET - Ireland ('000) ¹	135.6	121.3
of which:NEET (unemployed) - Ireland ('000)	59.4	48.1
Total number unemployed persons aged 15-29 years - Ireland ('000)	68.5	58.7
Percentage share of total unemployed persons aged 15-29 years		
represented by those classified as NEET for the same age group - Ireland	86.7%	81.9%
Percentage share of total unemployed persons aged 15-29 years		
represented by those classified as NEET for the same age group - EU28	75.9%	75.4%

Source: Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS), Central Statistics Office, Ireland and Eurostat.

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

1 Includes persons who are unemployed and active.

State Bodies Data

79. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Taoiseach the number of vacancies in each State board under the aegis of his Department, in tabular form. [49943/17]

The Taoiseach: I appoint members to the National Economic and Social Council (NESC) and the National Statistics Board (NSB).

I appoint members to the NESC in accordance with the provisions of the National Economic and Social Development Office Act 2006 and the Alteration of Composition Order 2010. The legislation provides for nominations from five sectors - business and employer, ICTU, farming and agricultural, community and voluntary and environmental; public servants; and independent experts. Four vacancies remain in the independent members category. These vacancies will be filled in accordance with the process set out in the *Guidelines on Appointments to State Boards*.

I appoint members to the NSB in accordance with the Statistics Act 1993. The Act provides for an eight member National Statistics Board, including the Director General of the CSO, ex officio, and an Assistant Secretary from my Department and the Department of Finance. Two members are nominated by the Taoiseach and three by organisations representative of the users of official statistics and providers of information under the Act. There are currently no vacancies on the NSB.

The table provided shows the number of vacancies in the NESC and NSB.

State Board	Number of Vacancies
NESC	4
NSB	0

Quarterly National Household Survey

80. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Taoiseach when the quarter three 2017 figures for the Quarterly National Household Survey will be published. [49826/17]

Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach (Deputy Joe McHugh): Effective from Q3 2017, the CSO is compiling Labour Market Statistics from a new Labour Force Survey (LFS). This new survey has replaced the Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS) and will see the introduction of Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI), a redesigned questionnaire and enhancements to the survey methodology. As a consequence, the results for the LFS Q3 2017 have been rescheduled from their planned publication on November 21st 2017 until the 16th January 2018. These results will incorporate the revision of population estimates arising from the 2016 Census of Population along with a back-cast series of the existing data for the QNHS to ensure comparability of the headline indicators.

Brexit Expenditure

81. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Taoiseach the spend on social media campaigns by his Department and the agencies under its aegis on issues related to Brexit; the spend by campaign, platform and State agency. [49962/17]

The Taoiseach: My Department and agencies under its remit has had no spend to date on social media campaigns on issues related to Brexit. However, the Strategic Communications Unit will be working with other Departments on a cross Government campaign on Brexit in the coming months.

Rugby World Cup 2023

82. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Taoiseach the amount spent promoting and advertising the video Ireland At Its Best in respect of the Rugby World Cup bid on social media; and if promotion on social media of this video was carried out outside the State. [49963/17]

The Taoiseach: A key part of the modernisation of Government communications is the greater use of social media. Merrionstreet.ie has a presence on a number of social media platforms. The amount spent on advertising the video "Ireland at its best" for Ireland's Rugby World Cup bid was €9,500, sponsored posts appeared on Facebook, YouTube and Twitter. The posts were targeted at "all adults" to both a national and international audience.

Appointments to State Boards Data

83. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Taoiseach the names of persons he has appointed to each State board under the aegis of his Department who have not come from the Public Appointments Service list of suitable candidates, in tabular form. [50005/17]

The Taoiseach: I appoint members to the National Economic and Social Council (NESC)

and the National Statistics Board (NSB).

I appoint the NESC in accordance with the National Economic and Social Development Office Act 2006 and the NESC (Alteration of Composition) Order 2010 - SI 603/ 2010. I appoint members to the NSB in accordance with the Statistics Act 1993.

In the case of the NESC the legislation provides that I appoint members on the nomination of the organisations and interests set out, ie. business and employer, ICTU, farming and agriculture, community and voluntary and environmental sectors, public servants and independent members.

Since becoming Taoiseach I have appointed three members to the NESC following nomination by the farming and agricultural interests.

These are:

Damien McDonald, IFA

John Enright, ICMS

TJ Flanagan, ICOS.

Departmental Bodies Data

84. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Taoiseach the bodies under the aegis of his Department to which his Department provides in excess of €1 million funding per annum; the public funding received by these bodies; the bodies in which 50% or more of their income comes from public sources. [50122/17]

The Taoiseach: The National Economic and Social Council (NESC), is the only State Agency in under the aegis of my Department.

The NESC receives an annual grant from my Department's Vote. NESC allocation from my Department's Vote is €2.01m in 2017.

In addition, in 2017 the Council will receive ca. €90,000 from the Environment Fund, managed by the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment, in relation to sustainable development work.

Departmental Staff Data

85. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Taoiseach the number of women appointed at senior level (details supplied) within his Department; the number of men employed in each of these roles; and the total number of employees in his Department. [50348/17]

The Taoiseach: There is a total of 196.1 whole-time equivalent staff members employed by my Department.

The gender breakdown of staff employed by my Department in the relevant roles is outlined in the table provided.

Department of the Taoiseach Staff by Gender

Role	Female	Male
Secretary General	0	1
Second Secretary General	0	1
Assistant Secretary	2	4*
Deputy Secretary	0	0
Principal Officer	6**	6
Assistant Principal Officer	19	12

* Following a retirement next year, the number of male Assistant Secretaries employed by my Department will fall to three.

** My Department is in the process of recruiting a female Principal Officer for the Strategic Communications Unit which will bring the number of female Principal Officers employed by my Department to seven.

Female representation on my Department's Management Board currently stands at 40% and will rise to 44% following the planned retirement at Assistant Secretary level referred to above.

The gender balance at Principal Officer level in my Department is currently 50:50 (with female officers at Principal Officer level rising to 54% in the coming weeks). Female officers at Principal Officer level currently hold the posts of Head of Section/Division in Economic Division; Britain and Northern Ireland Affairs Section; EU Section; Protocol and General Division; Social Policy and Public Service Reform Division; and Corporate Affairs Division.

Departmental Staff Data

86. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Taoiseach the number of persons working in his constituency office and private office; and the levels at which they work. [50349/17]

The Taoiseach: The tables provided outline the number of staff employed by my Department to work in my constituency and my private office. This includes both politically appointed staff and established civil servants.

Taoiseach's Private Office

Salary Scale (Equivalent)	Number of Employees
Deputy Secretary	1
Assistant Secretary	3
Principal Officer	2
Assistant Principal Officer (Higher)	1
Assistant Principal Officer	1
Higher Executive Officer	3
Executive Officer	1
Clerical Officer	6

Taoiseach's Constituency Office

Salary Scale (Equivalent)	Number of Employees
Higher Executive Officer	1
Executive Officer	2
Clerical Officer	1

Departmental Contracts Data

87. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Taoiseach the public contracts between his Department and companies (details supplied) in each of the years 2011 to 2016; and the value of each contract. [50408/17]

The Taoiseach: My Department did not have any contracts with the companies in question between 2011 and 2016.

Departmental Communications

88. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Taoiseach the person who sent him or presented him with the email from the Department of Justice and Equality he referred to on Leaders' Questions on 21 November 2017; the time it was presented; and the format in which it was presented. [50411/17]

The Taoiseach: At 23:27 hours on 20 November 2017 one of my staff emailed me a copy of the email I referred to during Leaders Questions on 21 November 2017. The email was sent to my Department by the Department of Justice and Equality very shortly before this.

Foireann Roinne

89. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Taoisigh cén líon iomlán foirne atá fostaithe ina Roinn faoi láthair; cé mhéid post atá daingnithe nó aitheanta ag an Roinn (i scéim teanga, nó ar aon bhealach eile) mar phoist a bhfuil riachtanas Gaeilge ag baint leo; cé mhéid duine atá ann ag a bhfuil líofacht i nGaeilge agus atá ag feidhmiú sna poist sin atá daingnithe nó aitheanta mar phoist a bhfuil riachtanas Gaeilge ag baint leo; an bhfuil sé beartaithe ag an tráth seo aon phost eile de chuid na Roinne a aithint mar phoist a bhfuil riachtanas Gaeilge. [50689/17]

90. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Taoisigh cé mhéid folúntas a líonadh ina Roinn ó thús na bliana seo; cé mhéid de na folúntais sin a bhain le poist a bhí sainaitheanta mar phoist a raibh Gaeilge riachtanach ina leith; cé mhéid folúntas atá le líonadh faoi láthair agus cé mhéid de na folúntais siúd atá sainaitheanta mar fholúntais a bhfuil riachtanas Gaeilge ag baint leo. [50706/17]

The Taoiseach: I propose to take Questions Nos. 89 and 90 together.

Baineann príomhobair mo Roinne le hobair an Rialtais agus pléimid den chuid is mo le ranna agus gníomhaireachtaí rialtais eile. Mar thoradh air sin, ní bhíonn éileamh mór ón phobal ar sheirbhísí i nGaeilge.

Tá coibhéis lánaimseartha 196.1 ball foirne fostaithe i mo Roinn faoi láthair. Tá sé tugtha le fios ag roinnt den fhoireann i mo Roinn go bhfuil roinnt Gaeilge acu agus go bhfuil an iniúlacht acu réimse seirbhísí a chur a fáil trí Ghaeilge. Ina measc, tá beirt beirt oifigeach atá ardliófa i nGaeilge – duine i m'Oifig Phríobháideach agus duine i bPreasoifig an Rialtais – atá ainmnithe chun seirbhísí a chur ar fáil don phobal i nGaeilge faoi Scéim Teanga 2016-2019 mo Roinne.

Is leor an méid sin post ainmnithe chun freastal ar an éileamh atá ann ar sheirbhísí Gaeilge.

Earcaíodh 30 duine ag mo Roinn go dtí seo in 2017 tríd an tSeirbhís um Cheapacháin Phoiblí. Ba ó phainéil Gaeilge a tháinig beirt acu sin.

91. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of vacancies in each State board under the aegis of his Department, in tabular form. [49929/17]

Taoiseach and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The table details the number of vacancies currently on each of the State Boards under the aegis of my Department.

Agency	Number of Vacancies
NSAI	1
IAASA	0
HSA	0
PIAB	0
Enterprise Ireland	1
IDA Ireland	1
SFI	0
WRC	0

Details of all appointments and vacancies on the State Boards under the aegis of my Department are available on the State Boards website at www.stateboards.ie.

IDA Ireland

92. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the status of the advance IDA facility in County Carlow; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [49974/17]

Taoiseach and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The IDA's Regional Property Programme was announced in 2015, with €150 million designated for investment in property solutions outside Dublin. The Programme includes the construction of nine new advance buildings around the country. Carlow was selected as a location for one of these facilities. The building there is currently at concept and design stage with construction expected to begin in 2018 and complete by early 2019.

Appointments to State Boards Data

93. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the names of persons she has appointed to each State board under the aegis of her department that have not come from the Public Appointments Service list of suitable candidates, in tabular form. [49991/17]

Taoiseach and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Since I have taken up the position of Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation I have made the following appointments/reappointments to the State Boards under the aegis of my Department.

Agency	Details of Appointment
PIAB	Dermot Gorman, Insurance Ireland was appointed to the Board of the Personal Injuries Assessment Board (PIAB) on 26th September 2017. Under section 56 of the Personal Injuries Assessment Board Act 2003 Insurance Ireland is designated to nominate one person to the Board of PIAB.
Enterprise Ireland	Declan Hughes, Departmental Representative was appointed to the Board of Enterprise Ireland on 4 September 2017. The appointment was on the basis of office held.
	Helen Ryan, Geoff Meagher, Colum Horgan and John McMahon were reappointed to the Board of Enterprise Ireland on 10 July 2017.

IDA Ireland

94. **Deputy Michael Harty** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the status of the IDA search for a replacement industry for a plant (details supplied); his views on whether the issue is a lost cause; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50031/17]

Taoiseach and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Leo Varadkar): As we are aware, in November 2015 AG announced the regrettable decision to close the facility in Clarecastle following a review of Roche's worldwide manufacturing network for small molecules. This review also resulted in closures at plants in other international locations.

Prior to Roche confirming its decision to close the plant, IDA Ireland engaged with management at the site and with the parent company in Switzerland on how jobs could be retained. This engagement is continuing and the Agency's officials met with senior management of the company in Switzerland in September. At this meeting, the company outlined its commitment to continue working with the IDA to find a buyer for the site. The Agency has itself been actively promoting the site to existing clients and potential investors and will continue to do so in the time ahead. I am hopeful that a new investor will be identified in due course and that further employment opportunities will in turn be created for the people of Clarecastle and the surrounding area.

Ministerial Communications

95. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation if he has used a private email account to send or receive official documents or positions on Brexit; and if so, the details of this correspondence. [50052/17]

Taoiseach and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I have not used a private email account to send or receive official documents or positions on Brexit since my appointment as Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation.

I have been informed by the Department of Justice & Equality that in April 2016 a briefing note on Brexit was sent from the former Minister's Department of Justice & Equality email account to her personal email account on 20/04/2016 at 05:37am.

A version of the relevant briefing document is already in the public domain and available on the website of the Oireachtas at http://opac.oireachtas.ie/AWData/Library3/TAOdoclaid260416_171147.pdf

IDA Ireland Data

96. **Deputy Seamus Healy** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the amount of financial assistance aid and grants that have been provided to a company (details supplied) over the past seven years; the amount of financial assistance, aid and grants planned to be provided to this company in each of the years 2018 to 2020; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50075/17]

Taoiseach and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The level of grant assistance provided by IDA Ireland to the company referred to by the Deputy during the last seven years is as follows:

- 2010: €5,071,416; and
- 2013: €3,093,054

It is not possible at this stage to detail how much grant aid, if any, will be paid for the period between 2018 to 2020.

Departmental Bodies Data

97. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the bodies under the aegis his Department to which his Department provides in excess of €1 million funding per annum; the public funding received by these bodies; the bodies in which 50% or more of their income comes from public sources; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50108/17]

Taoiseach and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The table provided outlines the 2017 allocations to those bodies who receive more than €1 million from my Department's Vote

Office/Agency	Total 2017 funding provision as per Revised Estimates Volume (gross)
InterTrade Ireland	€7.960 million
IDA Ireland	€179.264 million
National Standards Authority of Ireland	€5.802 million
Enterprise Ireland	€269.5 million
Local Enterprise Offices (x 31)	€32.931 million
Patents Office	€2.841 million
Science Foundation Ireland	€172.631 million
Tyndall National Institute	€4.500 million
Labour Court	€3.648 million

Office/Agency	Total 2017 funding provision as per Revised Estimates Volume (gross)
Workplace Relations Commission	€13.379 million
Employment Appeals Tribunal	€1.709 million
The Health & Safety Authority	€18.112 million
Office of Director of Corporate Enforcement	€4.895 million
Competition & Consumer Protection Commission	€12.138 million
Companies Registration Office (including the Registry of Friendly Societies)	€7.488 million
Irish Auditing & Accounting Supervisory Authority	€2.105 million

Of these bodies, only the National Standards Authority of Ireland and the Irish Auditing and Accounting Supervisory Authority receive less than 50% of their funding from public sources. The NSAI receives the majority of its funding from fees that it imposes for services to clients. IAASA receives the majority of its funding from levies that it imposes on entities that it regulates.

Competition and Consumer Protection Commission

98. **Deputy Joe Carey** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation his plans to introduce the necessary measures being sought by the chairperson of the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission to provide for greater powers of sanction; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50303/17]

Taoiseach and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I assume that the Deputy is referring to the publicly stated desire of the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (CCPC) that it would be given the power to impose administrative/ civil fines for breaches of competition law.

The current legal position is that civil fines are not provided for in Irish law for anti-competitive practices. My Department obtained advice on the issue of civil fines from the Office of the Attorney General to the effect that civil fines are not provided for in Irish law for anti-competitive practices having regard to Article 38.1 of the Constitution which provides that no person shall be tried on any criminal charge save in due course of law. In that context, any national legislation to introduce civil fines that would lower the burden of proof from beyond reasonable doubt to the balance of probability would pose constitutional difficulties having regard to the protection afforded in Article 38.1 of the Constitution.

On 22 March 2017, the EU Commission published a proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council to empower the competition authorities of the Member States to be more effective enforcers and to ensure the proper functioning of the internal market. One of the Directive's aims is to ensure that all National Competition Authorities are able to impose effective deterrent fines. The proposal is currently being debated at the Council Working Group on Competition and is also being considered by the European Parliament.

I am aware that the Law Reform Commission published an Issues Paper entitled "Regulatory Enforcement and Corporate Offences" on 27 January 2016. The Issues Paper invited views

on the supervisory and enforcement powers of the State's main financial and economic regulators (including the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission)(CCPC) and the issue of administrative and civil fines was raised. I understand the CCPC made a submission to the Law Reform Commission on 19 September 2017 in response to the Issues Paper requesting the power to levy such fines. Any recommendations or proposals that may emanate from this exercise in due course will be carefully considered by my Department.

Departmental Contracts Data

99. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the public contracts between his Department and companies (details supplied) in each of the years 2011 to 2016; the value of each contract; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50394/17]

Taoiseach and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Details of contracts between the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation and the companies in question during the period 2011-2016 are set out in the tables.

2011

Company	Details of Contract	Value of Contract
Nil	N/A	N/A

2012

Company	Details of Contract	Value of Contract
Nil	N/A	N/A

2013

Company	Details of Contract	Value of Contract
Nil	N/A	N/A

2014

Company	Details of Contract	Value of Contract
Ernest & Young	Analysis of Sectoral Ecosystems – Input to Enterprise Policy 2025 – Strategic Policy Division	61,461.00

2015

Company	Details of Contract	Value of Contract
*Deloitte & Touche	Forensic Accounting and Analysis	€23,249.46

2016

Company	Details of Contract	Value of Contract
*Deloitte & Touche	Forensic Accounting and Analysis	€8,260.68

*Both sets of data relate to a single contract, which was paid for in phases; the total paid was €31,510.14.

Foreign Direct Investment

100. **Deputy Eugene Murphy** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the reason counties Roscommon, Leitrim and Meath were not allocated funds from of the €93 million in funding for grant aid that was distributed by the Industrial Development Authority to help develop and support foreign direct investment in these counties; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50670/17]

Taoiseach and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Regional development remains a key priority of mine and I am determined to help drive job creation all over Ireland, including in counties Roscommon, Leitrim and Meath. Increasing and sustaining foreign direct investment (FDI) outside of our main urban areas represents an important part of this wider approach.

IDA Ireland's strategy for 2015-2019 includes a commitment to increase FDI in every region outside Dublin by 30%-40%. The Agency made good progress towards achieving this goal in 2016, with 52% of all jobs created by IDA Ireland's clients last year based outside of Dublin. Mid year results for 2017 provide evidence that further strides are being made, with 54% of all job approvals in the first six months of the year being based outside of Dublin.

It is important to note that grants paid in a particular year are not necessarily linked to either the investments won or the jobs created in that 12-month period. Grants are generally drawn down over the lifetime of a project which is normally over a period of three to five years. Some investments which result in job creation may not be grant aided and some well established firms may no longer be receiving grant payments.

In relation to the specific counties mentioned by the Deputy, companies based in all three have received significant grant assistance over the last ten years. The table below outlines the total grants paid in the three counties since 2007.

County	Grants received by companies based in the County since 2007
Roscommon	€3,359,963
Leitrim	€2,480,200
Meath	€7,073,070

Foireann Roinne

101. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Taoisigh agus Aire Gnó, Fiontar agus Nuálaíochta cén líon iomlán foirne atá fostaithe ina Roinn faoi láthair; cé mhéid post atá daingnithe nó aitheanta ag an Roinn (i scéim teanga, nó ar aon bhealach eile) mar phoist a bhfuil riachtanas Gaeilge ag baint leo; cé mhéid duine atá ann ag a bhfuil líofacht i nGaeilge agus atá ag feidhmiú sna poist sin atá daingnithe no aitheanta mar phoist a bhfuil riachtanas Gaeilge ag baint leo; an bhfuil sí beartaithe ag an tráth seo aon phost eile de chuid na Roinne a aithint mar phoist a bhfuil riachtanas Gaeilge [50675/17]

102. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Taoisigh agus Aire Gnó, Fiontar agus

Nuálaíochta cé mhéid folúntas a líonadh ina Roinn ó thús na bliana seo; cé mhéid de na folúntais sin a bhain le poist a bhí sainaitheanta mar phoist a raibh Gaeilge riachtanach ina leith; cé mhéid folúntas atá le líonadh faoi láthair agus cé mhéid de na folúntais siúd atá sainaitheanta mar fholúntais a bhfuil riachtanas Gaeilge ag baint leo. [50692/17]

Taoiseach and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I propose to take Questions Nos. 101 and 102 together.

Tá 866 duine fostaithe i mo Roinn faoi láthair. Toisc go bhfuil éileamh íseal ar sheirbhísí a fháil trí mheán na Gaeilge i mo Roinn, níl postanna daingnithe nó aitheanta ann ina mbeidh gá le Gaeilge. Dá bhrí sin, níl aon folúntas le líonadh faoi láthair atá sainaitheanta mar cheann a bhfuil riachtanas Gaeilge ag baint leis.

Tá an Roinn tiomanta go hiomlán don Scéim Teanga 2015-2018, a ullmhaíodh de bhun Alt 15 d'Acht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla 2003. Cuireann an scéim seo le prionsabail na Seirbhísí Ardchaighdeáin do Chustaiméirí agus le Cairt Chustaiméirí na Roinne, lena chinntiú nach mbeidh aon constaic roimh chustaiméirí na Roinne ar mian leo a ngnó a dhéanamh trí Ghaeilge. I gcomhréir leis an Scéim seo, tá mo Roinn tiomanta do measúnú a dhéanamh ar bhonn leanúnach ar an éileamh ar sheirbhísí trí Ghaeilge ar bhealach beartaithe, comhleanúnach ina mbeidh teacht ag daoine air.

I rith an bliana seo caite, iniúchadh an tAonad um Fhoghlaim agus um Fhorbairt sa Roinn an méid cainteoirí Gaeilge i measc líon foirne na Roinne. Léirigh an t-iniúchadh sin go raibh 6 baill foirne agus an gaeilge ar a dtoil acu. Anuas ar sin, lena chinntiú go bhfuil mo Roinn i gcónaí in ann seirbhísí ardchaighdeáin a sholáthar don phobal trí mheán na Gaeilge, tugann an tAonad sin deiseanna do fhostaithe na Roinne cúrsaí gaeilge a dhéanamh chun a scileanna Gaeilge a fheabhsú. Táthar ag cur na hoiliúna sin ar fáil le go mbeidh cohórt ball foirne ar fáil againn a fhéadann cabhrú le haonaid ghnó freagra a thabhairt do chliant ar mian leo cumarsáid a dhéanamh leis an Roinn trí Ghaeilge. I dtaca leis an sprioc sin, tá 22 baill foirne tar éis cúrsa oiliúna a dhéanamh nó a chíochnú i mbliana (féach thíos).

Teastas sa Ghaeilge Ghairmiúil

Leibhéal	Líon Foirne
Leibhéal 3	11
Leibhéal 4	4
Leibhéal 5	2
Leibhéal 6	3
Cúrsa bunleibhéil ar líne	2
Iomlán	22

Corporation Tax

103. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Finance the cost of double taxation relief granted against corporation tax in each of the years 2010 to 2016 and to date in 2017, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49855/17]

104. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Finance the cost of double taxation relief granted against corporation tax to companies assessed to tax in large cases division, by industry, in each of the years 2010 to 2016 and to date in 2017, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49856/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 103

and 104 together.

I am advised by Revenue that information in respect of the Exchequer cost of Double Taxation (including additional foreign tax credit) is available in tabular form on the Revenue Statistics webpage at <https://www.revenue.ie/en/corporate/information-about-revenue/statistics/tax-expenditures/costs-expenditures.aspx>.

The amount of the tax credit claimed by companies is shown separately at <https://www.revenue.ie/en/corporate/information-about-revenue/statistics/income-distributions/ct-calculation.aspx> for 2011 to 2015 (the most recent year available). Information for 2010 is available at <https://www.revenue.ie/en/corporate/documents/statistics/archive/statistical-report-2011.pdf> on page 107.

The double taxation relief (including additional foreign credit) claimed by companies administered by Revenue's Large Cases Division by sector for the years requested is as shown in the table below.

Sector	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015*
	€m	€m	€m	€m	€m	€m
Manufacturing	19.7	20.9	16.7	7.8	14	49.9
Wholesale and retail Trade	25.1	25.4	13.5	12.1	80.6	35.6
Information and Communication	29.4	103.2	56.7	60	52	26.2
Financial and Insurance Activities	363.3	242.6	291.3	243.2	483.6	754.9
Professional Scientific and Technical Activities	97.5	89.1	101.4	119.1	128.6	150.9
Other Sectors	13.1	17.3	14.1	10.7	16.8	44.4
All Sectors	548	498.5	493.7	452.8	775.6	1061.9

*Information in respect of 2016 is not yet available as the bulk of the returns have only recently been filed and will be processed, parsed and analysed in the coming months.

Appointments to State Boards Data

105. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Finance the number of vacancies in each State board under the aegis of his Department, in tabular form. [49936/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am advised that the number of vacancies on each State board under the aegis of my Department is as follows:

State Board	Number of vacancies
Central Bank Commission	2
Credit Union Restructuring Board	Nil
Financial Services Ombudsman Council	3
Irish Fiscal Advisory Council	Nil
National Asset Management Agency	2
National Treasury Management Agency	Nil
Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland	Nil

Small and Medium Enterprises Supports

106. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Finance if he has examined a special assignee relief programme that is focused on SMEs in order to attract highly skilled talent to work in sectors that have skills and labour shortages. [49985/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Special Assignee Relief Programme (SARP) is aimed at reducing the cost to employers of assigning key individuals already employed by their companies from abroad to take up positions in the Irish based operations of the employer. The intention is that the recipients of SARP will assist with the establishment of additional functions for their companies in Ireland and, due to a transfer of skills, these functions will be able to operate without the assistance of SARP after a period. The existing SARP scheme is limited to existing overseas employees of companies and is not available to new hires.

As SMEs do not tend to have operations outside Ireland, the deputy's proposal concerning a scheme that is similar to SARP but is targeted at SMEs could result in individuals from abroad being cheaper to hire than Irish residents, thereby resulting in potential displacement of employment for Irish residents in favour of non-resident job-seekers.

However, the deputy may also be aware that in Budget 2018 I announced the introduction of the new Key Employee Engagement Programme (KEEP) with the objective of supporting SMEs in Ireland in competing with larger enterprises to recruit and retain key employees. KEEP provides for a more advantageous tax treatment of gains arising on the exercise of qualifying share options acquired in SME companies. These KEEP share options will provide key employees with a financial incentive linked to the success of the company and may improve the attractiveness of an SME employment offer. In addition, the KEEP incentive is available both to individuals based in Ireland and those coming to Ireland to avail of employment opportunities here.

The commencement of the programme is subject to EU State Aid approval, which is expected to issue shortly.

Stamp Duty

107. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the estimated cost of applying a 1% stamp duty for first time buyers, maintaining the 2% for those who are purchasing a home having sold their home and applying a 5% stamp duty rate for investors including all persons and structures purchasing property as an investment. [49989/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As the Deputy's Question refers to a

home, it is assumed that the Question is in relation to residential property.

The current rate of Stamp Duty on residential property is 1% on the first €1 million of the consideration and 2% on any excess.

First time buyers are liable to the current Stamp Duty rates on residential property. The majority of such properties would attract a rate of 1% so no cost would arise from proposed change. It is not clear whether the 2% rate proposed for non-first time buyers would apply below as well as above the €1 million threshold.

In addition, I am advised by Revenue that it is not possible to identify from Stamp Duty records those purchasers who are investors.

Data Protection

108. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Finance how the central credit register is compliant with data protection here in the context of financial companies and or institutions sending personal data to the Central Bank; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49961/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As the Deputy is aware, the Credit Reporting Act 2013 provides for the establishment of the Central Credit Register (CCR) by the Central Bank of Ireland. The Act (and the Regulations made under that Act) provide the legal basis for the collection and processing of specified personal and credit information for the purposes of the CCR. The Central Bank has advised that, in the context of its work in developing the CCR, it completed a Privacy Impact Assessment and consulted with the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner in advance of publishing these Regulations as provided for in the Act.

Lenders are required to send personal and credit data directly to the Central Credit Register database and the Central Bank of Ireland is the data controller for the Central Credit Register.

The Central Bank has also advised that it has appointed CRIF, a global provider of secure information processing services, to operate the Register on its' behalf. CRIF operates in accordance to the ISO 27001 standard and it is audited on a regular basis. This certification is an indication that the Information Security Management System put in place in CRIF, is in line with the requirements of this international standard. In terms of information security, the Central Bank has performed a review of CRIF operations against the Bank's Third Party Information Security Framework.

It should be noted that the lender is responsible for personal data in their possession, and while it is in their possession, they are a data controller under the Data Protection Acts. It is a matter for each lender to satisfy themselves that they are compliant with data protection obligations. In that regard it should also be noted that section 19 of the Credit Reporting Act provides that nothing in that Act limits the operation of the Data Protection Acts.

Appointments to State Boards Data

109. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Finance the names of persons he has appointed to each State board under the aegis of his Department who have not come from the Public Appointments Service list of suitable candidates, in tabular form. [49998/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Following a review of the work of the

Credit Union Restructuring Board's (ReBo) work, as required under the Credit Union and Co-operation with Overseas Regulators Act 2012, which demonstrated that it has completed the performance of its restructuring functions, ReBo is in the process of being dissolved.

ReBo's restructuring activity ceased on 31 March 2017 and its operations were wound down on 31 July 2017. The board, with the exception of a Central Bank nominee, resigned on 31 July 2017.

While the legislation to wind down ReBo is being drafted, I have appointed two Departmental Officials, Brian Corr and Deirdre Aherne, to the Board of ReBo from 1 August 2017 on an interim basis to manage matters during the period up to the wind down. I have appointed Mr Corr as Chair. Both of these appointments were made outside of the Public Appointments Service process.

Tax Collection

110. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Minister for Finance his plans to amend the capital acquisitions tax provisions whereby siblings not living in the family home but who inherit this home from a deceased sibling are obliged to pay this tax straight away even though the house cannot be sold as another sibling who is not inheriting the house has a right of residence to remain there; his views on whether these provisions are unfair; if the Revenue Commissioners will examine such cases sympathetically particularly when those inheriting the house only have the State pension as income; if the tax can be paid in instalments; if interest is charged in circumstances in which the payment is deferred; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50024/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am informed by Revenue that the inheritance tax treatment in the case of a right of residence depends on whether or not that right of residence is an exclusive one, i.e. where the beneficiary has the right to exclude other people if he or she so chooses.

An exclusive right to live in a property is generally given as a life interest which means that the sibling in residence in effect owns the property for his or her lifetime, as do the other two siblings who will inherit the property at a later date when the first sibling dies. It is only at this stage that an inheritance tax liability will arise for the other two siblings.

If the right of residence is not exclusive, then the siblings will have an inheritance tax liability at the date of the original inheritance. As the inheritance does not allow a full enjoyment of the property, the benefit received can be adjusted to allow for a deduction in respect of the right of residence. Revenue allows a deduction of 10% of the market value of the benefit in respect of each person who has a right of residence. The reduced market value is then compared to the relevant group threshold and the tax rate applied on any excess of the market value over the threshold. In the case of siblings the group threshold is currently €32,500.

In my view the provisions relating to right of residence are fair and equitable and I have no plans to change these provisions at this time.

In relation to an inability to pay any inheritance tax that may be due, I have been advised by Revenue that a beneficiary of 'real' property, such as land or buildings, is entitled to pay any tax due by instalments over a period of up to five years, subject to interest. Revenue also has the discretion to allow payment over a longer period of time where the tax cannot be paid without excessive hardship. In cases of hardship, Revenue also has the discretion to allow payment to be postponed for such period and on such terms (including the waiver of interest) as it thinks fit.

Tracker Mortgages

111. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Finance if an analysis has been conducted by his Department of the net financial position of each bank involved in the tracker mortgage scandal, including the benefits to the banks of moving persons to higher interest rates and the costs of the redress schemes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50039/17]

112. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Finance if his attention has been drawn to any analysis conducted of the net financial position of each bank involved in the recent tracker mortgage scandal, including the benefits to the banks of moving persons to higher interest rates and the costs of the redress schemes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50040/17]

113. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Finance if he has requested analysis to be conducted regarding the net financial position of each bank involved the recent tracker mortgage scandal, including the benefits to the banks of moving persons to higher interest rates and the costs of the redress schemes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50041/17]

114. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Finance if he has requested, or will request, of the Central Bank of Ireland, an analysis of the net financial position of each bank involved the recent tracker mortgage scandal, including the benefits to the banks of moving persons to higher interest rates and the costs of the redress schemes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50042/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 111 to 114, inclusive, together.

The Central Bank's Tracker Mortgage Examination requires all mortgage lenders that provided tracker interest rate mortgages in the Irish market to conduct a complete review of their mortgage loan books to assess compliance with both contractual and regulatory requirements relating to tracker mortgages. Lenders' reviews were required to be conducted in accordance with the Central Bank's framework for completion of the Examination (the "Framework") issued in December 2015. The Framework requires lenders to identify all impacted customers and to address customer detriment in line with the Central Bank's Principles for Redress. Steps being taken by lenders to address customer detriment identified during the course of the Examination include putting customers on the correct interest rates (rate rectification) in order to stop the immediate harm caused to them and providing redress and compensation.

The Central Bank has provided a number of update reports on the progress of the examination, the most recent of which was last October. While the Central Bank is not in a position, due to confidentiality requirements under Central Bank legislation, to comment on the position of individual regulated entities, it has put aggregated information into the public domain in relation to the Tracker Examination. The latest Central Bank update report indicates that lenders had identified approximately 13,000 impacted accounts as at end September (though it should be noted this figure will increase as the Examination continues to progress) and that €120 million had been provide to impacted customers (in respect of approximately 3,300 accounts) pursuant to the Examination. This is additional to the 7,100 accounts (and the €43 million redress and compensation paid) identified prior to the industry wide examination. Individually lenders report and make provision for the costs they incur, or expect to incur, in respect of tracker mortgage failings to their customers.

The Central Bank's enforcement work continues in parallel to the Examination. One en-

enforcement investigation has already concluded in relation to Springboard Mortgages

[https://www.centralbank.ie/news/article/\(29-11-2016\)-settlement-agreement-between-the-central-bank-of-ireland-and-springboard-mortgages-limited-trading-as-springboard-mortgages](https://www.centralbank.ie/news/article/(29-11-2016)-settlement-agreement-between-the-central-bank-of-ireland-and-springboard-mortgages-limited-trading-as-springboard-mortgages)). Other investigations are at varying stages of completion and the Governor of the Central Bank has stated that he expects that all the main banks will be subject to Central Bank enforcement investigations. The Central Bank is prepared to carry out multiple enforcement investigations and the investigations are detailed and forensic. As part of ongoing enforcement investigations, interviews with relevant individuals have been and will be conducted, and large volumes of documentation have been and will continue to be gathered and reviewed.

Ministerial Communications

115. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Finance if he has used a private email account to send or receive official documents or positions on Brexit; and if so, the details of this correspondence. [50059/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): In reply to the Question, I do not use any such accounts for official business.

Property Tax Collection

116. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Finance the procedure to be followed to facilitate the payment of property tax by the relatives of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50087/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Section 36 of the Finance (Local Property Tax) Act 2012 (as amended) provides that a liable property owner can authorise another person to complete any LPT filing or payment obligations on his/her behalf.

I am advised by Revenue that an LPT return was filed in respect of the property in question in 2013 confirming 'Valuation Band' 5 (€250k to €300k) and payment for the period 1 July to 31 December 2013 was also received. However no further payments were received and a liability of €2,104 now exists in respect of the 2012 Household Charge and LPT for the years 2014 to 2017 inclusive. An additional amount of €495 in respect of 2018 will also fall due on 1 January 2018.

The personal representative of the property owner should make contact with Revenue as soon as possible at telephone number 065 6849081 to discuss the situation including the possibility of paying the outstanding liability on a phased basis.

Philanthropy Initiatives

117. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the tax advantages in place for a person or business which engages in philanthropy, including income tax, estate taxes and so on; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50097/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am advised by Revenue that there are a number of provisions in the Taxes Consolidation Act (TCA) 1997 and the Capital Acquisitions Consolidation Act 2003 that provide for tax relief in respect of philanthropy.

Section 848A and Schedule 26A of the TCA provide for a scheme of tax relief for donations to approved bodies, including eligible charities. As the Deputy may be aware, changes were made to that scheme in Finance Act 2013. Individual donors no longer benefit from the tax relief associated with their donations; the relief is repaid direct to the charity. A blended rate of relief of 31% applies to all tax-payers regardless of their marginal tax rate. Donations are “re-grossed” i.e. the sum donated is treated as a net amount after deduction of tax and the gross sum that would give rise to that net amount is calculated. Relief in the amount of the imputed tax payable on the gross sum is repaid to the charity. There is an annual donation limit of €1 million per individual for which a refund of income tax can be claimed by approved bodies.

Section 847A of the TCA provides tax relief for relevant donations to approved sports bodies for the funding of approved projects. An approved sports body means a body established for the sole purpose of promoting athletic or amateur games or sports and whose income is exempt from tax where it is applied solely for those purposes. An approved project is a project as specified in the section which has been approved by the relevant Minister. Under this scheme a self-assessed individual is entitled to claim a deduction in respect of a donation made to an approved sports body in calculating his or her total income. Where a PAYE-only taxpayer makes a relevant donation to an approved sports body, the body is deemed to have received the payment net of income tax and is entitled to claim a refund of the income tax deducted after the donation has been re-grossed at the donor’s marginal rate.

When a company makes a qualifying donation to an approved body, including an eligible charity or an approved sports body, it can claim a deduction for the donation as if it were a trading expense or an expense of management for the accounting period in which it is paid.

I am further advised by Revenue that there is provision in section 1003 of the TCA 1997 for the payment of tax by the donation of heritage items to Irish national collection. A credit equal to 80% of the market value of the item donated can be set against taxpayers’ liabilities for certain taxes.

The heritage item(s) must be an outstanding example of the type of item involved, pre-eminent in its class, whose export from the State would constitute a diminution of Ireland’s accumulated cultural heritage or whose import into the State would constitute a significant enhancement of the accumulated cultural heritage of Ireland and must be suitable for acquisition by the Approved Bodies which include the National Archives, National Gallery, National Library and National Museum. The determination as to whether an item is a suitable heritage item under the scheme is carried out by a selection committee of experts, and is subject to valuation limits.

Section 1003A of the TCA provides that tax relief is available in respect of the donation of heritage property to the Irish Heritage Trust or the Commissioners of Public Works in Ireland, subject to provisions that the property is a suitable heritage property, for example that it is of significant historical or scientific value. The scheme takes the form of a non-refundable payment on account of tax of an amount equal to 50 per cent of the market value of the heritage property donated and can be credited against particular tax liabilities incurred by the donor. There is a ceiling of €6 million on the aggregate value of heritage properties that may be approved for donation in any one year.

Section 611 of the TCA provides that where an asset is disposed of for no consideration to the State to a charity or to other specified bodies such as the National Archives, the National Gallery, the National Library or the National Museum, the disposal is treated as not giving rise to either a gain or a loss for capital gains tax purposes.

Section 76 of the Capital Acquisitions Tax Consolidation Act 2003 provides that where a gift or an inheritance is taken for public or charitable purposes the beneficiary is exempt from

both gift tax and inheritance tax and the gift or inheritance is not taken into account when computing tax to the extent that Revenue is satisfied that it has been, or will be, applied for purposes which in accordance with the laws of the State are public or charitable.

Departmental Bodies Data

118. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Finance the bodies under the aegis his Department to which his Department provides in excess of €1 million funding per annum; the public funding received by these bodies; the bodies in which 50% or more of its income comes from public sources; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50115/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): None of the eighteen bodies under the aegis of my Department receives in excess of €1 million funding from my Department.

Of these eighteen bodies, the following eight receive more than 50% of their income from public sources:

Office of the Comptroller & Auditor General

Credit Union Advisory Committee

Credit Union Restructuring Board*

Disabled Drivers Medical Board of Appeal

Irish Fiscal Advisory Council

National Treasury Management Agency**

Office of the Revenue Commissioners

Tax Appeals Commission

* The Government has made available €250 million to the Credit Union Fund (CUF) for the voluntary restructuring of credit unions. Over its lifetime, the Credit Union Restructuring Board has drawn down €22.615 million from the CUF for operational costs and for financial assistance to credit unions involved in restructuring projects.

** The expenses that the NTMA incurs are met by the Central Fund, ISIF, NAMA and SBCI.

Paradise Papers.

119. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Finance if his attention has been drawn to companies and persons mentioned in papers (details supplied); if so, the actions he has taken towards these companies. [50234/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am advised by Revenue that an analysis of the Panama Papers database was undertaken after it was published by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) and that a number of individuals, addresses and intermediaries with Irish connections were identified. All of the individuals, companies and intermediaries concerned have been profiled using both Revenue's internal systems and open sources, and all necessary enquiries are being made.

As respects the Paradise Papers, I am advised by Revenue that, if information from the

Paradise Papers identifies individuals or entities associated with Ireland with possible Irish tax issues, whether it be evasion or aggressive tax avoidance, Revenue will examine the cases and intervene as appropriate.

Where cases involving offshore tax evasion are identified, the persons concerned are precluded from making a qualifying disclosure and accordingly now face the prospect of substantial (unmitigated) penalties, publication in the quarterly list of tax defaulters and possible prosecution.

Where anti-avoidance legislation can be applied to recover tax avoided through the use of unacceptable tax avoidance practices and schemes, Revenue will seek to apply such legislation with a view to recovering any Irish tax avoided together with all associated interest and tax avoidances surcharges.

Revenue has started to examine the Paradise Papers with a view to identifying all persons and entities with a possible connection with the State. As cases are identified the information from the Paradise Papers will be compared against the information already in Revenue's files. All information available will be assessed and if a compliance intervention is warranted the appropriate intervention will be opened.

Corporation Tax

120. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Finance the amount of profit reported and the amount of corporation tax paid by the top 50 Irish builders over the past 25 to 30 years; and the way in which that compares to reported revenues by the 50 Irish builders over the past 25 to 30 years. [50235/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am advised by Revenue that what is available is the amount of taxable profits and associated Corporation Tax liability for the top 50 companies in the construction sector for the most recent ten years. Information for earlier years is not retained in Revenue records in a format that facilitates similar analysis. The top 50 companies are selected on the basis of the companies with largest amounts of taxable profits and income as returned on Corporation Tax returns for these years. This information is shown in the table.

Tax Year	Taxable Income and Profits - €m	Tax Liability - €m
2015	310.0	36.9
2014	270.6	33.7
2013	362.0	44.4
2012	326.5	34.3
2011	261.6	33.1
2010	267.6	29.5
2009	231.1	26.8
2007	699.3	88.6
2006	1,003.0	32.3
2005	873.2	118.0

Note: Information is not available on the basis of taxable income for the tax year 2008 due to technical changes on Revenue's computer system that were introduced at that time.

Construction Industry

121. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Finance the number of new houses that were built and sold by the top 50 Irish builders over the past 25 to 30 years. [50236/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Data on new electricity connections recorded monthly by ESB Networks has been used as a proxy for house completions for many years, as it represents the best available indicator that a residential unit has become available for occupation. However, this indicator does not provide information on the firm responsible for constructing the dwelling. Such data is not available from other sources. As such, it is not possible to identify the number of new houses that were built and sold by the top 50 Irish builders over the past 30 years.

Public Private Partnerships

122. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Finance his views on whether public money should be provided to tax-avoiding builders under PPP schemes. [50238/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): A Public Private Partnership (PPP) is an arrangement between the public and private sectors with clear agreement on shared objectives for the delivery of public infrastructure and/or public services by the private sector that would otherwise have been provided through traditional public sector procurement.

Public private partnerships are fundamentally taxed in the same manner as a normal trading company.

There are two rates of Corporation Tax (CT):

- 12.5% for trading income
- 25% for income from an excepted trade
- 25% for non-trading income, for example rental and investment income.

Corporation Tax is charged on the profits in a company's accounting period. This period cannot be longer than 12 months. If the tax rate changes in the accounting period, profits will be apportioned on a time basis and taxed accordingly.

There is also a 33% rate that applies to chargeable gains.

Guidance and further information on the Public Private Partnership process in Ireland is available at <http://ppp.gov.ie>, including Central Guidelines on Corporation tax treatment of Public Private Partnership Agreements.

Nursing Home Fees

123. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Minister for Finance the tax relief available for persons paying nursing home fees either for themselves or for a family member; and if such relief is available in cases in which a person has the fair deal scheme. [50345/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am advised by Revenue that Income Tax relief in respect of nursing home fees is available under section 469 of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997. Nursing home expenses may be claimed under the heading of health expenses.

The relief in respect of nursing home expenditure is allowed at an individual's marginal rate of tax and may be claimed at the end of the year in which the expenses have been incurred.

Where an individual avails of the Fair Deal Scheme, the amount relievable is limited to the contribution towards nursing home fees made by that individual. No relief is available in respect of any amount covered by the State.

For PAYE customers, the quickest and easiest way to claim health expenses is online using PAYE Services in myAccount. Income tax registered customers can claim the tax relief on their Form 11 annual tax return. Customers who are unable to use Revenue's online service should submit a Med 1 form to their local Revenue office.

Local Government Fund

124. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Finance the estimated payment to the Exchequer from the local government fund in 2018. [50362/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Water Services Act 2017 was enacted on 17 November 2017. Part 8, sections 54 to 59 relate to reform of the Local Government Fund (LGF) and give legislative effect to the change in funding sources from the LGF and the Central Fund arising from the Report of the Working Group on the Future Funding Model for Irish Water.

Additionally, Chapter 7, "Budgetary Reform" of the Economic and Fiscal Outlook publication, as part of Budget 2018, outlines the reform of the LGF, due to take effect from the 1st January 2018.

Following this reform there will no longer be any payments made from the LGF to the Exchequer.

Departmental Contracts Data

125. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Finance the public contracts between his Department and companies (details supplied) in each of the years 2011 to 2016; the value of each contract; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50401/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I can advise the Deputy of the following public contracts between my Department and Ernst & Young (EY), Deloitte, and KPMG during the period 2011 - 2016. I am including in my reply all payments made (excluding VAT) to the companies referred to by the Deputy during that period.

Company	Description of service/contract	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Deloitte	External review of the Compilation of General Government Debt Statistics		€50,000				

Com-pany	Description of service/contract	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
	Professional Services for the development of the Deloitte Ireland EU Presidency App			€25,000			
	Professional Services in relation to a forensic acquisition and high level review of computer activity			€3,500			
Deloitte LLP	Advice in relation to litigation				€79,622		
Deloitte (Tech Solutions)	Oracle JDEwards Support						€4,718
EY	Tax research paper 'The historical development and international context of the Irish corporate tax system'				€5,000		
	Accountancy secondee provided to the Department's Oireachtas Banking Inquiry team to provide advice on matters relating to the Committee of Inquiry into the Banking Crisis					€78,720	
KPMG	Services in connection with the proposed dissolution of the Credit Union Restructuring Board (ReBo)						€35,000

The Deputy may wish to note that the Department's contract with KPMG is a six month contract with an initial fee of €35k. In the event that this contract is extended by the Department beyond six months, additional hourly rates will apply in accordance with the terms of the contract. No payments have been made to KPMG to date.

I can advise the Deputy that the fee for the accountancy secondee from EY to the Department was paid by the NTMA.

I can inform the Deputy that my Department also engaged individuals from KPMG and Deloitte on a pro bono basis during the above period.

The Deputy may wish to note that my Department publishes on a quarterly basis, payments for legal, consultancy and professional fees on its website - <http://www.finance.gov.ie/obligations/financials/consultancy/>.

Pension Provisions

126. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the status of an application for approval from the Revenue Commissioners for a legacy pension for a person (details supplied) in County Cork to be transferred in order to allow the setting up of a personal retirement bond. [50476/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am advised by Revenue that a response to this request issued to the administrator of the pension fund on 23rd November 2017.

From the information received, it appears that the person concerned was employed by two companies within the same Group. However, there was no break in employment within the Group or service for the purposes of the individual's pension rights. Even though the person was employed by a number of companies in the Group the principal employer for the purpose of the pension scheme remained the same.

The person concerned has since 2016 resumed employment with a company within the Group. However the principal employer for the purpose of this pension plan is the same as the one he was previously a member of. Essentially, this means that the individual has become a member of a pension scheme sponsored by his current employer, having previously been a member of another pension scheme also sponsored by the same employer company.

There is no provision in pension tax legislation to allow what is called a "split transfer" in these circumstances. In other words, it is not permitted for an individual to transfer part of his pension fund to an entirely separate pension arrangement, such as a Personal Retirement Bond.

Financial Services Regulation

127. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if there is an obligation on the financial service provider to inform persons it plans to unveil a new product or enhance an existing product, both of which would be very beneficial to the person concerned in circumstances in which a person is making a significant decision on same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50478/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I have consulted with the Central Bank on this issue and it has confirmed that its Codes of Conduct do not impose a requirement on

regulated entities to inform consumers of their plans to unveil new products or enhance an existing product.

Under the Central Bank's Consumer Protection Code 2012 (the Code), a regulated entity must ensure that in all its dealings with customers and within the context of its authorisation it acts honestly, fairly and professionally in the best interests of its customers and the integrity of the market.

Provision 3.10 of the Code provides that where a regulated entity intends to amend or alter the range of services it provides, it must give notice to affected consumers at least one month in advance of the amendment being introduced. Provision 4.12 of the Code requires regulated entities to draw up its terms of business and provide each consumer with a copy prior to providing the first service to that consumer. In this document, the regulated entity must set out the basis on which it will conduct business with consumers. Provision 6.1 of the Code provides that where a regulated entity makes a material change to its terms of business, it must provide each affected consumer with a revised terms of business as soon as possible.

That said, I can appreciate that a consumer will be aggrieved to find that a new product becomes available after they have taken a less favourable one. However there must be a cut-off point between the availability of products and it is inevitable that some people will fall on what they consider to be the wrong side of that line. The Deputy will be aware of the availability of the Financial Services Ombudsman in the case of unresolved complaints against a regulated financial service provider and the fact that the Ombudsman is independent in the performance of his duties.

NAMA Property Sales

128. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if the sale of the entire National Asset Management Agency, NAMA, development at a location (details supplied) is being conducted in an open market basis with competitive tendering; if not, the reason for not conducting the sale on an open market basis; the amount NAMA has invested in the property to date at this location through development funding or other means; the residual value of the site with planning permission; NAMA's disposal strategy; the steps that have been taken in the sales process to date; if a special purchaser has been identified as occurred in respect of other NAMA transactions; the extent of profit or loss the State will make on the project; the decisions of the NAMA board in respect of this asset; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50518/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As Minister for Finance, I have no role in individual transactions as such commercial decisions are a matter for the NAMA Board.

I am advised by NAMA that the asset in question is under the control of Savills as Receiver who appointed two property agents in 2015, JLL and Lisney, to openly market the property. I am further advised that the property was subsequently launched to the market in April 2016. I am advised that the appointed Receiver and his agents continue to be open to all credible offers which will be given due consideration by him and that, as Receiver, he is legally obliged to make a recommendation to NAMA of any such offers that, in his view, will maximise debt repayment. Finally, I am advised that to date the Board of NAMA has not received nor considered any offers proposed by the Receiver and his agents.

Tax Reliefs Data

129. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Finance the number of persons that avail each year of the tax relief in respect of third level fees. [50647/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am advised by Revenue that the Cost of Tax Expenditures table is available on the Revenue Statistics webpage at <https://www.revenue.ie/en/corporate/information-about-revenue/statistics/tax-expenditures/costs-expenditures.aspx>. This table sets out data on a wide range of reliefs, credits and allowances, including the number of taxpayer units benefiting from relief in respect of qualifying third level education fees, as well as the estimated total cost to the Exchequer, for the years 2004-2015, the latest year for which data are available.

The table, taken from the data in the Cost of Tax Expenditures table, outlines the number of claims and the cost to the Exchequer for this relief annually since 2010:

Year	No. of Claims	Cost of Claims (€m)
2015	23,900	12.9
2014	24,000	12.7
2013	23,600	12.5
2012	25,300	13.4
2011	27,600	14.5
2010	31,700	19.4

Knowledge Development Box

130. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Finance further to Parliamentary Question Nos 126 and 127 of 14 November 2017, his views on the reason for the uptake of the knowledge development box; his plans to review the functioning of this scheme in view of same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50654/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am advised by Revenue that the Knowledge Development Box (the “KDB”) only applies for accounting periods commencing on or after 1 January 2016. The claimant company has a period of up to 24 months to make a claim for relief under the KDB. Taking an accounting period which commenced on 1 January 2016 and ended on 31 December 2016, the tax return was due for filing on 23 September 2017.

A small number of companies whose accounting periods ended on 31 December 2016 have submitted claims for their 2016 tax returns, which were filed by 23 September 2017. Due to taxpayer confidentiality, Revenue cannot comment on the size or nature of the claimant companies to date.

Given the large amount of documentation that is necessary, and given that an election into the KDB is irrevocable, it is anticipated that more companies will make use of the 24 month time frame available. As such, more claims in respect of the year ended 31 December 2016 are expected to be made by 23 September 2018.

Furthermore, the KDB can only be claimed by companies who are already carrying out qualifying R&D which has led to the creation of qualifying IP (being a patent, copyrighted software, patentable but not patented IP for small companies). It is expected that companies, in the medium and longer term, will restructure their functions in order to locate more of their R&D activities in Ireland to avail of the KDB.

At this stage, for the reasons stated above, it is too early to review the functioning of the scheme. The scheme will be reviewed in accordance with the Department of Finance Tax Ex-

penditure Guidelines

(http://www.budget.gov.ie/Budgets/2015/Documents/Tax_Expenditures_Oct14.pdf).

Corporation Tax Regime

131. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance if he has given consideration to introducing legislation which would prohibit the use of legacy losses against profits beyond 31 December 2017 in view of the fact that banks have accumulated losses from the financial crisis of some €34 billion. [50668/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Corporation Tax Loss Relief is provided for by Section 396 of the Taxes Consolidation Act (TCA) 1997. Loss relief for corporation tax is a long standing feature of the Irish Corporate Tax system. It allows for losses incurred in the course of business to be accounted for when calculating a business' tax liabilities. This mechanism is a standard feature of Corporation Tax systems in all OECD countries.

There would be a material negative impact on the valuation of the States investments from any change in tax treatment of accumulated losses where the banks are concerned. It is critically important to understand that the State is actually getting value today from these deferred tax assets through our share sales.

In the case of the AIB, the bank's deferred tax asset of €2.8 billion is in the shareholder's funds or book value of the bank. Earlier this year we sold 29% of the bank in the recent IPO at a valuation of close to one times the book value yielding proceeds of approximately €3.4 billion.

In fact our remaining 71% investment is currently valued at more than one times the bank's book value so based on the current tax treatment we should continue to get hundreds of millions in proceeds linked to the deferred tax asset as we sell down our shares.

Despite the scale of losses accumulated the banks are contributing to the Exchequer through the financial institutions levy. To recognise the part that the banks played in the financial crisis, in 2013, the Government decided that the banking sector should make an annual contribution of approximately €150 million to the Exchequer for the period from 2014 to 2016. In Budget 2017, the payment of this levy was extended until 2021. It was anticipated that the bank levy could be expected to raise €750 million over five years.

Financial Services Regulation

132. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance his views on the fact that certain banks in recent years forced loan guarantors (details supplied) to take out life insurance policies in respect of a mortgage for another family member; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50671/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Central Bank has informed me that a mortgage lender is not obliged to require a guarantor of a mortgage loan to take out such a policy. However, a mortgage lender is also not prohibited from making an offer of a mortgage loan contingent on the guarantor taking out a life assurance policy.

The following requirements apply in the case of a borrower:

The Central Bank's Consumer Protection Code 2012 provides that a regulated entity must

not make the sale of a product or service contingent on the consumer purchasing another product or service from the regulated entity. This provision does not prevent a regulated entity from offering additional products or services to consumers who are existing customers which are not available to potential consumers.

The Consumer Credit Act 1995 provides that mortgage lenders shall arrange, through an insurer or insurance intermediary, a life assurance policy providing in the event of the death of the borrower before the mortgage has been repaid, for payment of the amount of the principal estimated by the mortgage lender to be outstanding in the year in which the death occurs on the basis that payments have been made by the borrower in accordance with the mortgage.

The European Union (Consumer Mortgage Credit Agreements) Regulations 2016, which transpose the Mortgage Credit Directive, provide that if a mortgage lender requires a consumer to hold a policy of insurance related to the credit agreement, the lender must accept a policy selected by the consumer. This policy may be from an insurance provider different to the preferred supplier of the lender, provided that the policy has a level of guarantee equivalent to the one the lender proposed, and must be no greater than the amount that would be required to guarantee repayment of the outstanding credit or to insure the value of the security.

Foireann Roinne

133. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Airgeadais cén líon iomlán foirne atá fostaithe ina Roinn faoi láthair; cé mhéid post atá daingnithe nó aitheanta ag an Roinn (i scéim teanga, nó ar aon bhealach eile) mar phoist a bhfuil riachtanas Gaeilge ag baint leo; cé mhéid duine atá ann ag a bhfuil líofacht i nGaeilge agus atá ag feidhmiú sna poist sin atá daingnithe nó aitheanta mar phoist a bhfuil riachtanas Gaeilge ag baint leo; an bhfuil sé beartaithe ag an tráth seo aon phost eile de chuid na Roinne a aithint mar phoist a bhfuil riachtanas Gaeilge. [50682/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Is é líon iomlán na foirne atá fostaithe ar fhoireann na Roinne ar an 31ú Deireadh Fomhair ná 330. Níl aon phost sa Roinn daingnithe mar phost a bhfuil riachtanas Gaeilge ag baint leis, agus tá roinnt ball foirne a bhfuil ag an Roinn atá abalta déileáil le comhfhreagras agus ceisteanna i nGaeilge, más gá.

Níl sé mar dhualgas oifigiúil ar aon bhall foirne áirithe de chuid na Roinne seirbhís trí Ghaeilge a sholáthar trí Ghaeilge d'aon duine a lorgaíonn í. Tá panéil deonach d'fhoireann na Roinne an bhfuil ar a gcumas seirbhís a sholáthar trí Ghaeilge ar fail sa chás go n-iarrtar í. Tacaíonn an Roinn le baill foirne gur mian leo a gcuid Gaeilge a fheabhsú trí chusaí GaelChultúir. *An Straitéis 20 Bliain don Ghaeilge 2010 - 2030 Tuarascáil ar Dhul Chun Cinn: 2010 - 2015 An Roinn Airgeadais.*

Rinneadh suirbhé Teanga agus Cáilíochtaí le linn 2014 inar léiríodh go bhfuil inniúlacht i nGaeilge ag 7 ball foirne. Is ionann sin agus thart ar 2.12% de líon foirne reatha na Roinne.

The total number of staff employed in my Department at 31st October is 330.

There are no posts in my Department to which Irish is necessary and there are a number of staff who have the competence to deal with correspondence and queries through Irish, as required.

It is not the official duty of any staff member to provide service through Irish to a person who seeks it. There is a voluntary panel of Department staff in place of staff who have the capacity to provide service in Irish where it is sought. The Department supports staff members

who wish to improve their Irish through Gaelchultúir courses.

A Language and Qualifications survey was carried out during 2014 which indicated that 7 members of staff have some proficiency in Irish. This represents some 2.2% of the current staff compliment of the Department.

Foireann Roinne

134. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Airgeadais cé mhéid folúntas a líonadh ina Roinn ó thús na bliana seo; cé mhéid de na folúntais sin a bhain le poist a bhí sainaitheanta mar phoist a raibh Gaeilge riachtanach ina leith; cé mhéid folúntas atá le líonadh faoi láthair agus cé mhéid de na folúntais siúd atá sainaitheanta mar fholúntais a bhfuil riachtanas Gaeilge ag baint leo. [50699/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Níl aon phost sa Roinn daingnithe mar phost a bhfuil riachtanas Gaeilge ag baint leis, agus tá roinnt ball foirne a bhfuil ag an Roinn atá abalta déileáil le comhfhreagras agus ceistanna i nGaeilge, más gá.

Tá an Roinn tar éis 62 folúntais a líonadh I 2017. Tá 5 folúntais fós le líonadh againn.

There are no posts in my Department to which Irish is necessary and there are a number of staff who have the competence to deal with correspondence and queries through Irish, as required.

The Department filled 62 vacancies in 2017. There are currently 5 vacancies to be filled.

Coastal Protection

135. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will report on the progress of funding for coastal defence works for Arklow; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50044/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran): The identification and assessment of problems of coastal erosion are matters for Local Authorities in the first instance. Local Authorities may carry out works to address such problems using their own resources or, if necessary, may apply for funding under the Office of Public Works (OPW) Minor Flood Mitigation Works and Coastal Protection Scheme.

I am advised that a revised application was submitted by Wicklow County Council (WCC) in April 2017 for funding under the Minor Works Scheme to undertake a project at North Beach, Arklow.

In August 2017, the OPW replied to WCC on its application and advised the Council that the application could not be approved because the works proposed related to maintenance works on an existing structure which works are not eligible for funding and because the proposal did not meet the cost benefit criteria of the scheme. The Council was also advised that, given the scale and complexity of the problem, it may be more appropriate for them to seek funding for a detailed coastal erosion and flood risk management study to better understand the coastal processes involved in the wider region and to inform any further applications for funding for works.

An application for funding for such study has not been received to date.

The OPW will continue to work constructively with WCC on this matter and to provide advice and assistance to the Council as required in relation to the advancement of the study.

Office of Public Works Properties

136. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the status of the acquisition and selection of a site for the Garda regional headquarters in Sligo; if a site has been acquired or selected for a new Garda station for Sligo; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that members of an organisation (details supplied) in Sligo are refusing to operate from the station; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50102/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran): The Office of Public Works (OPW) continues to progress the procurement of a suitable site for the new Garda station in Sligo. As negotiations on the acquisition are not yet complete the release of any details concerning the site etc. at this stage could impact negatively on this process.

The OPW is continuing to work with An Garda Síochána (AGS) to establish its requirements for the existing Station, including remediation of certain identified health and safety concerns. New proposals are with AGS for consideration and for further discussion with OPW in relation to delivery.

Garda Station Refurbishment

137. **Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform his plans to provide the necessary funding in order to ensure that Mountjoy Garda station, Dublin 7, is fully wheelchair accessible for persons; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50229/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran): OPW is delivering a programme of universal access upgrades to certain Garda Stations identified as priority by An Garda Síochána (AGS). OPW has no plans at present to upgrade universal access facilities at Mountjoy Garda station.

Garda Stations

138. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the status of the plan to build a new Garda station in County Sligo; if a suitable greenfield site has been identified; the stage at which negotiations are at in relation to the purchase of the site; the expected timeframe for the tender for the works to be advertised; the expected timeframe for building works to commence; the length of time it is expected the works will take; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50378/17]

139. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the status of the plan to build a new Garda station in Sligo; if a suitable greenfield site has been identified; the stage negotiations are at in relation to the purchase of that site; when the tender for the works will be advertised; when building works will commence; the length of time the works will take; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50461/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin

Boxer Moran): I propose to take Questions Nos. 138 and 139 together.

The Office of Public Works (OPW) continues to progress the procurement of a suitable site for the new Garda station in Sligo. As negotiations on the acquisition are not yet complete the release of any details concerning the site etc. at this stage could impact negatively on this process.

The OPW is continuing to work with An Garda Síochána (AGS) to establish its requirements for the existing Station, including remediation of certain identified health and safety concerns. New proposals are with AGS for consideration and for further discussion with OPW in relation to delivery.

Pension Provisions

140. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will address a matter raised in correspondence (details supplied) regarding the financial emergency measures in the public interest legislation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49899/17]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The matter raised relates to pension increase policy as it will apply to public service pensioners who have retired post end-February 2012. Section 6.2 of the Public Service Stability Agreement 2018-2020, which was published on 8 June 2017 at the conclusion of the public service pay talks, indicates that, over the duration of that agreement, for those who retired or will retire post end-February 2012, to the extent that they retired on 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.

This means that, over the period of the agreement, pensions in payment will increase in line with pay increases where necessary to ensure that those pensions are equal to the pensions being awarded to same-grade retiring staff.

The FEMPI reversal measures, including any pay increases under the agreement and further Public Service Pension Reduction (PSPR) amelioration, will apply from their operative date only.

Appointments to State Boards Data

141. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the number of vacancies in each State board under the aegis of his Department, in tabular form. [49941/17]

142. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the names of persons he has appointed to each State board under the aegis of his Department that have not come from the Public Appointments Service list of suitable candidates, in tabular form. [50003/17]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 141 and 142 together.

The Board of the Public Appointments Service is the only State Board under the aegis of my Department.

The Public Service Management (Recruitment and Appointments) Act 2004, which established the Public Appointments Service (PAS), specifies that the chairperson and ordinary members of the Board shall be appointed by the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform in consultation with the Minister for Health, the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government and the Minister for Justice and Equality.

The Act also specifies that in appointing persons as members of the Board the Minister shall ensure that:

- at least 2 of them have either or both civil service and other public service experience and knowledge which the Minister considers relevant, and

- at least 2 of them have expertise in human resource management, customer service and recruitment outside the public service which the Minister considers relevant.

The information the Deputy is seeking is set out below.

Anne Marie Taylor - Appointed by the Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform as having expertise in human resource management, customer service and recruitment outside the public service.

Damien McCallion - Nominee of the Minister for Health

David Cagney - Nominee of the Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform

Eddie Molloy - Appointed by the Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform as having expertise in human resource management, customer service and recruitment outside the public service.

Fiona Tierney - Ex officio. CEO of PAS

Paul Lemass - Nominee of the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government

There are currently 3 vacancies on the PAS Board including the chair of the Board. Two of the vacancies, including the position of chair, are being filled through the State Board process operated by PAS, while the third vacancy is normally filled following a recommendation from the Minister for Justice and Equality.

Ministerial Communications

143. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he has used a private email account to send or receive official documents or positions on Brexit; and if so, the details of this correspondence. [50064/17]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I do not use any such accounts for official business.

Departmental Staff Retirements

144. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will report on progress implementing the recommendation in the interdepartmental report on fuller working lives (details supplied); the public sector employers with which his Department has been in contact on this matter; if in the context of his statement to Dáil Éireann on 20 June 2017

the review has been completed; the expected publishing date of the review; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50096/17]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): In reply to the Deputy's question on this subject on 20 June last, I indicated that the review of issues relating to the compulsory retirement age in the public service which was being undertaken by my Department on foot of the report of the Interdepartmental Group on Fuller Working Lives was nearing completion and that it was expected to be completed by the end of that quarter.

That Review has now been completed. I am currently considering issues arising from the review and I intend to make proposals to Government in the matter shortly. Future policy in this area will be decided by Government.

Departmental Bodies Data

145. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the bodies under the aegis his Department in which his Department provides in excess of €1 million funding per annum to these bodies; the public funding received by these bodies; the bodies in which 50% or more of its income comes from public sources; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50120/17]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): There are three bodies under the aegis of my Department that receive in excess of €1 million funding from my Department and have 50% or more of their income come from public sources. The funding for each body is summarised in the table below for years 2015, 2016 and 2017.

Subheads	Body under the Aegis	2015 Outturn - €m	2016 Outturn - €m	2017 Rev Esti- mates - €m
A.3 & A.10	Economic and Social Research Institute	2.8	2.7	2.9
B.3 & A.10	Institute of Public Administration	2.9	2.9	2.8
A.6 & A.7	Special EU Programmes Body	3.1	1.9	2.5

The expenditure of these bodies are examined by the relevant auditing authorities for each and the Department monitors the expenditure to ensure that these public bodies are spending moneys appropriately in line with the public policy objectives pertaining to each grant. Where grants relate to EU Funded Programmes, expenditure is also subject to the eligibility checks associated with the relevant Programme.

As the Deputy may be aware, these public bodies have other sources of income apart from the funding received from my Department. In line with the business and financial reporting requirements of the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies, audited annual accounts of the ESRI and the IPA are laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas, as well as being published on their respective websites. These published accounts incorporate detailed notes pertaining to income.

The Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB) is one of the six cross-border Bodies set up under the British-Irish Agreement and is jointly funded by sponsor departments in Ireland and Northern Ireland. The tabulated figures above relate to payments made to the SEUPB by my

Department. The SEUPB publishes its audited accounts annually.

Office of Public Works Properties

146. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the Office of Public Works plans for use of the site of the Central Mental Hospital, Dundrum, Dublin 14, when the facility is moved to the new national forensic mental health hospital in Portrane; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50307/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran): The Central Mental Hospital is in the full ownership of the Commissioners of Public Works in Ireland (CPW). The Health Service Executive (HSE) currently occupy the site and I believe that they will move this facility to Portrane in the future.

Once the HSE vacate the site a decision will be made by the CPW on its future use having regard to the requirements of all other state bodies.

Departmental Contracts Data

147. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the public contracts between his Department and companies (details supplied) in each of the years 2011 to 2016; the value of each contract; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50406/17]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The table provides details of the contracts between my Department and the companies in question for the years 2011 to 2016:

Year	Company	Amount	Purpose/Brief description of contract
2011	Deloitte	€65,915	Expert external support for development of the Public Service Reform Plan 2011
2012	Deloitte	€75,152	Expert external support for the implementation of Public Service Reform initiatives
2012	Deloitte	€67,650	Civil Service Payroll Shared Services Project: Baseline and Business Case
2013	Deloitte	€226,553	Civil Service Banking and Financial Management Shared Services Project: Baseline and Business Case
2013	Ernst & Young	€84,374	Civil Service Learning and Development Project: Provision of Baseline Report on L&D Function of Selected Public Service Bodies and undertaking a Feasibility Study into their provision on a Shared Services Basis
2014	Deloitte	€19,973	External Expert support for the National Shared Service Office
2014	Deloitte & Touche	€24,908	Procurement Advisory - Development of Process Framework
2015	Deloitte	€44,280	External, expert assistance, advice and support with the implementation of specific areas of the public service reform programme

Year	Company	Amount	Purpose/Brief description of contract
2015	Deloitte MCS Limited	€579,794	Drugs Cost Strategy
2015	Ernst & Young	€283,792	Consultancy and Procurement Capacity Support
2015	KPMG	€120,352	eInvoicing Recommendation Report
2016	Deloitte	€57,177	External, expert assistance, advice and support with the implementation of specific areas of the public service reform programme
2016	Deloitte MCS Limited	€371,375	Drugs Cost Strategy
2016	Ernst & Young	€22,386	Contracted out internal audit service
2016	Ernst & Young	€81,544	Consultancy and Procurement Capacity Support
2016	KPMG	€99,876	Provision of advisory services to investigate all possible approaches for data centre hosting of Government cloud infrastructure
2016	KPMG	€39,975	eInvoicing Recommendation Report

Departmental Expenditure

148. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the amount of rent paid to date for the Department of Health's new headquarters (details supplied). [50637/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran): Rental payment on this property commenced on 22nd December 2016.

The rent paid to date by OPW on this lease for the office space to be occupied by the Head Quarters of Department of Health is €4,538,005.99.

Departmental Properties

149. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the person or company to which rent is being paid for the Department of Health's new headquarters (details supplied). [50638/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran): The Department of Health's new headquarters will be in the property known as Miesian Plaza Block 1, Baggot Street. The rent on the lease is paid by OPW to the landlord. The landlord is Remley.

Office of Public Works Expenditure

150. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the properties which are currently vacant and being rented by the Office of Public works; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50639/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran): The Office of Public Works pays rent on numerous leased properties throughout the country to provide accommodation for Government Departments/Offices. One such property is currently vacant as detailed below:

Waterford Customs Store 1,
Units 4 and 4a,
Tramore Road,
Waterford.

Public Sector Pay

151. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform his plans to examine issues related to the salary scale of new entrants; the number of meetings that have taken place in relation to same; the persons that attended; the business carried out; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50653/17]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The issue of addressing the difference in incremental salary scales between those public servants, who entered public service employment since 2011 and those who entered before that date was addressed with the relevant union interests under the provisions of the Haddington Road Agreement (HRA). From 1 November 2013 pre and post-2011 pay scales were merged into a single consolidated scale applicable to each grade. Generally, the third point of 1 November 2013 payscale is equivalent to the first point of the pre 2011 scale.

Guidelines in relation to the merging of the scales are available on my Departments website www.per.gov.ie/en/haddington-road-agreement/.

It should be noted that under the new Public Service Stability Agreement 2018-2020 which has recently been ratified by the Public Services Committee of the ICTU, pay increases range from 7.4 per cent to 6.2 per cent over three years, are progressive and will therefore favour new entrants.

The PSSA also recognises the issues of concern in relation to the salaries of new entrants and commits all parties to an examination of these matters within 12 months of the commencement of the Agreement. The first, exploratory meeting, with the full complement of Trade Unions and staff associations, took place on the 12th of October. This meeting, based on the contributions of all parties, agreed an outline process of oversight and data gathering. This process will be overseen by the Oversight Body for the PSSA. Further engagement will be undertaken over the coming months with those parties that have signed up to the Agreement.

Foireann Roinne

152. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Caiteachais Phoiblí agus Athchóirithe cén líon iomlán foirne atá fostaithe ina Roinn faoi láthair; cé mhéid post atá daingnithe nó

aitheanta ag an Roinn (i scéim teanga, nó ar aon bhealach eile) mar phoist a bhfuil riachtanas Gaeilge ag baint leo; cé mhéid duine atá ann ag a bhfuil líofacht i nGaeilge agus atá ag feidhmiú sna poist sin atá daingnithe no aitheanta mar phoist a bhfuil riachtanas Gaeilge ag baint leo; an bhfuil sé beartaithe ag an tráth seo aon phost eile de chuid na Roinne a aithint mar phoist a bhfuil riachtanas Gaeilge. [50687/17]

153. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Caiteachais Phoiblí agus Athchóirithe cé mhéid folúntas a líonadh ina Roinn ó thús na bliana seo; cé mhéid de na folúntais sin a bhain le poist a bhí sainaitheanta mar phoist a raibh Gaeilge riachtanach ina leith; cé mhéid folúntas atá le líonadh faoi láthair agus cé mhéid de na folúntais siúd atá sainaitheanta mar fholúntais a bhfuil riachtanas Gaeilge ag baint leo. [50704/17]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 152 and 153 together.

Tá 418 baill foirne fostaithe ag an Roinn Caiteachais Phoiblí agus Athchóirithe faoi láthair agus tá 4 baill foirne breise le tosnú ag obair leis an Roinn roimh dheireadh Mhí na Nollag, rud a chiallaíonn go mbeidh 422 baill foirne ag an Roinn. Thosaigh 100 baill foirne leis an Roinn i mbliana, agus tháinig a bhformhór mar chomharba ar an bhfoireann láithreach. Thosaigh 29 den fhoireann nua sa Roinn ar ghráid oibre a raibh coibhéiseach leis an ngrád a raibh acu san áit ina raibh siad ag obair. Níor bhain inniúlacht sa Ghaeilge mar riachtanas le folúntas ar bith i mbliana.

Faoin gCairt Chustaiméirí agus faoin bPlean Gnímh, tá an Roinn tiomanta le freastal ar gach chustaiméir ar mhian leo gnó a dhéanamh linn trí mheán na Gaeilge. Mar thoradh ar réimse oibre na Roinne, níl ardleibhéal teagmhála againn leis an bpobal nó ní chuireann an Roinn seirbhísí nó scéimeanna ar fáil go díreach do dhaoine den phobal. Cuirtear na seirbhísí ón Roinn ar fáil trí mheán an Bhéarla den chuid is mó, agus cuirtear seirbhísí teoranta ar fáil go dátheangach. Mar sin, níl aon ról aitheanta mar ról ina mbíonn inniúlacht sa Ghaeilge mar riachtanas. Tá liosta de dhaoine atá inniúil sa Ghaeilge a chothabháil ag an Roinn agus cuidíonn siad leis na seirbhísí seo a chur ar fáil.

First-Aid Training

154. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when Government funded, compulsory occupational first-aid training will be introduced for all physically able teachers and SNAs (details supplied). [50177/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Under the provisions of the Education Act 1998, the Board of Management is the body charged with the direct governance of a school.

The Board of Management of each school is responsible for the care and safety of all of the students in their school and care and safety should be at the centre of all policy and practices.

The Health and Safety Authority (HSA) advise that, by law, employers and those who control workplaces to any extent, must identify hazards in the workplaces under their control and assess the risk presented by the hazards.

Employers must write down the risks and what to do about them. This is known as Risk Assessment. The aim of Risk Assessment is to reduce the risk of injury and illness associated with work. The Risk Assessment(s) will form part of the employer's Safety Statement.

The Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (General Application) Regulations 2007 set out the First-Aid requirements for workplaces as follows: “Employers have a duty to provide first-aid equipment at all places at work where working conditions require it. Depending on the size or specific hazard (or both) of the place of work, trained occupational first-aiders must also be provided. Apart from some exceptions, first-aid rooms must be provided where appropriate. Information must also be provided to employees as regards the first-aid facilities and arrangements in place.”

It is important that the school management authority requests parents to ensure that the school is made aware of any medical condition suffered by any student attending. Where the school is aware of potential difficulties that may arise as a consequence of a medical condition suffered by one or more students, it may be possible for the management authorities, working in conjunction with parents, teachers and children to put preventative measures in place to lessen the possibility of any difficulties arising or to ensure that, if a student suffers from an illness requiring, for example, the administration of medication, that appropriate treatment is available.

Where a child requires adult assistance to assist in the administration of medicine and where the extent of assistance required would overly disrupt normal teaching time, SNA support may be allocated for this purpose.

It is a matter for the Board of Management to ensure that SNAs are in a position to effectively meet the care needs of students for whom SNA support has been allocated in the school when appointing an SNA.

Where specific training is required, the Board of Management should liaise with the Health Service Executive (HSE) in order to ensure that the HSE provides guidance and training that enables the SNA to meet the care needs of the pupil in an appropriate manner. It is a matter for individual school authorities to make such arrangements locally.

It is my Department’s experience that once the matter has been discussed in detail with the Board of Management and staff of a school, and once all parties are clear as to the procedures to be followed, arrangements can normally be made to assist the administration of first aid or medicine.

The NCSE are currently undertaking a Comprehensive Review of the SNA Scheme. In response to a progress report from the NCSE on the comprehensive assessment, the NCSE were requested to establish a working group, comprising relevant stakeholders, to assist in proposing a better model for providing care supports so as to provide better outcomes for students with special educational needs who have additional care needs.

This Working Group, which is chaired by Mr. Eamon Stack, Chairperson of the NCSE Council, has commenced its work and the work will run in tandem with the completion of the overall Comprehensive Review of the SNA Scheme. It is intended that the reports of the Working Group and of the Review will be completed in Spring 2018.

In tandem with this, a cross Departmental Working Group has been established to develop proposals in relation to the need for nursing supports in schools for children with complex medical needs. This Cross Departmental Working Group has to date held a number of meetings.

In the meantime, until any changes are agreed, the responsibility for funding Nurses, irrespective of where they are located, is the responsibility of the HSE and they also remain responsible for the clinical and professional governance of the nursing profession in Ireland.

In relation to insurance, the position is that the nature and terms of an individual school’s insurance arrangements are a matter between the individual school and its insurers.

Third Level Fees

155. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the grounds on which a waiver for non-EU fees for a course of study can be provided to an Irish resident returning after five years working in the medical area abroad. [50482/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The position is that to qualify for funding towards tuition fees, students must be first-time undergraduates, hold *inter alia* EU/EEA/Swiss nationality in their own right, and have been ordinarily resident in an EU/EEA/Swiss state for at least three of the five years preceding their entry to an approved third level course. These rules apply to all students from all EU/EEA/Swiss states. Students undertaking a second undergraduate qualification are not entitled to support under the scheme

Where students do not qualify for free fees funding they must pay the appropriate fee - either EU or Non-EU, as determined by each higher education institution. These institutions are autonomous bodies and the level of fee payable by students who do not meet the requirements of the free fees scheme is a matter for the relevant institution to determine.

Due to concerns in relation to the fact that in some cases the higher Non EU fee was being charged to students who hold EU/EEA/Swiss nationality but did not meet the residency clause for free fees, my Department requested that the higher education institutions charge the more moderate EU fees to such students who have completed at least five academic years of study (primary or post-primary level) in Ireland/EU/EEA/Switzerland and commence their first undergraduate course of study in an approved institution here. This position took effect from the academic year, 2014/15. In this way, such students, while still not eligible for tuition fees funding under the Free Fees Initiative, could avail of the more moderate EU rate of tuition fees.

Tax relief is available on these fees and students can apply to the Student Assistance Fund for financial support if needed.

As the terms of the scheme are for general application, exceptions cannot be made in individual cases.

Compulsory Purchase Orders

156. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason a compulsory purchase order is not available for a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49860/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): As the Deputy may be aware, my Department does not have statutory compulsory purchase order powers but Local Authorities have, on a small number of occasions, used their powers to assist in the acquisition of land for educational use. This generally occurs where a landowner is unwilling to sell a site which has been zoned for educational use.

While the CPO process has been used previously for school site acquisitions with the assistance of local authorities, it is generally only suitable when all efforts to reach agreement have been unsuccessful and all other options have been exhausted. A CPO process does not necessarily represent a speedier or more cost-effective outcome.

In the case of the school to which the Deputy refers, officials in my Department are currently working with relevant parties to progress matters with a view to reaching a resolution to the outstanding issues and as such a CPO is not considered appropriate at this point.

Questions - Written Answers
Student Support Schemes

157. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will outline the funding supports available to assist a person (details supplied) with third level education, apart from SUSI supports; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49863/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): As the Deputy is aware the principal financial support provided by my Department for students in third level education is the student grant scheme. The scheme makes available means-tested financial assistance to qualifying full-time registered students in higher education attending approved courses in the EU, EEA and the Swiss Confederation.

My Department does not operate or administer any scholarship scheme which extends to third level studies outside of the EU. However, the student in question should check with his/her higher education institution to establish if there is any funding available through the institution towards such studies.

Further Education and Training Colleges

158. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when a college (details supplied) is due to be completed; the stage in the planning process the project is at; if there are issues that need to be addressed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49873/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): As the Deputy may be aware, the project to which she refers has been devolved for delivery to the local Education and Training Board (ETB).

Planning permission has been received for the project and the ETB has confirmed that the Stage 2B documents (detailed design) are complete except for those in relation to the diversion of overhead power lines traversing the site. The ETB and the Design Team are actively pursuing this issue with ESBI. When this matter is resolved, this will enable the submission of the Stage 2B report to my Department for consideration.

Minor Works Scheme

159. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when the minor works grant will be granted for a school (details supplied). [49923/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The normal practice is for the Minor Works Grant to be announced towards the end of the year if funding permits. Over the next number of weeks the issue of the Minor Works Grant 2017/2018 will be considered in the context of my Department's overall capital position.

Minor Works Scheme

160. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to grant a minor works grant for schools in 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49924/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The normal practice is for

the Minor Works Grant to be announced towards the end of the year if funding permits.

Over the next number of weeks the issue of the Minor Works Grant 2017/2018 will be considered in the context of my Department's overall capital position.

Legal Costs

161. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the cost to date of a sex discrimination action taken by a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49927/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Minister is not aware of any proceedings that he is a party to in this matter. Any queries in relation to this action should be referred to UCD directly.

Appointments to State Boards Data

162. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of vacancies in each State board under the aegis of his Department, in tabular form. [49934/17]

167. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the names of persons he has appointed to each State board under the aegis of his Department that have not come from the Public Appointments Service's list of suitable candidates, in tabular form. [49996/17]

Minister for Education and Skills(Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 162 and 167 together.

For the Deputy's information details of the State Boards that fall under the remit of my Department, including details of board appointments to the respective State Boards are available on my Department's website at the following link; <http://education.ie/en/The-Department/Agencies/>.

The Deputy should note that individuals may be nominated for appointment by various organisations arising from the terms in the relevant Statutes of the Body concerned and accordingly board appointments while made by me are not in all cases made at my discretion.

In all cases where I had discretion, appointments were made from a list of candidates supplied by PASS or, in the case of re-appointments, they were made in line with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reforms November 2014 guidance circular.

The information requested by the Deputy in regard to the number of vacant positions on bodies in conjunction with details of board appointments to bodies under the aegis of my Department are provided in the attached two tables.

DES Board Member Vacancies

Body	Name (Identify Chair)	Date Appointment Ceases	Position Type
Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)	Vacancy	05/11/2017	Ordinary Member

Questions - Written Answers

Body	Name (Identify Chair)	Date Appointment Ceases	Position Type
Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)	Vacancy	05/11/2017	Chairperson
Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)	Vacancy	05/11/2017	Ordinary Member
Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)	Vacancy	05/11/2017	Ordinary Member
Residential Institutions Review Committee (RIRC)	Vacancy	Until 30th November 2016 or until the Board ceases operations, whichever is the soonest	Ordinary Member
The Teaching Council	Vacancy	October 2016	Ordinary Member

table cont.

DES Board Member Details

Body	Name (Identify Chair)	Date Appointed	Date of Reappointment	Date Appointment Ceases	Position Type	Gender	Basis of appointment (e.g. Pas Process, Ex-Officio, Employee Representative)
An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta (COGG)	Aodh Mac Craith	14/09/2016		31/12/2018	Ordinary Member	M	Nominee of Údarás na Gaeltachta
An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta (COGG)	Cathnia Ó Muirheartaigh	25/06/2015		31/12/2018	Ordinary Member	M	Nominee of Gaelscoileanna Teoranta
An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta (COGG)	Daríona Nic Con Iomaire	25/06/2015		31/12/2018	Ordinary Member	F	Nominee of Údarás na Gaeltachta
An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta (COGG)	Deirbhile Nic Craith	25/06/2015		31/12/2018	Ordinary Member	F	Nominee of Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO)
An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta (COGG)	Dónal Ó hAinífein	25/06/2015		31/12/2018	Chairperson	M	PAS Process

Body	Name (Identify Chair)	Date Appointed	Date of Reappointment	Date Appointment Ceases	Position Type	Gender	Basis of appointment (e.g. Pas Process, Ex-Officio, Employee Representative)
An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta (COGG)	Elaine Ní Neachtain	25/06/2015		31/12/2018	Ordinary Member	F	Nominee of National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)
An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta (COGG)	Marina Ní Threasaigh	25/06/2015		31/12/2018	Ordinary Member	F	Nominee of Inspectorate
An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta (COGG)	Robbie Cronin	17/11/2010	25/06/2015	31/12/2018	Ordinary Member	M	Nominee of Association of Secondary Teachers, Ireland (ASTI)
An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta (COGG)	Séamus Ó Fearraigh	25/06/2015		31/12/2018	Ordinary Member	M	Nominee of Teachers' Union of Ireland (TUI)
An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta (COGG)	Sean Mac Nía	25/06/2015		31/12/2018	Ordinary Member	M	Nominee of The Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA)
An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta (COGG)	Sinéad Nic Giolla Cionnaigh	25/06/2015		31/12/2018	Ordinary Member	F	Nominee of Foras Na Gaeilge
An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta (COGG)	Yvonne Ní Mhurchú	25/06/2015		31/12/2018	Ordinary Member	F	Nominee of Gaelscoileanna Teoranta
An tSeirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna (SOLAS)	Bernadette Brady	26/10/2013		26/10/2018	Ordinary Member	F	PAS Process
An tSeirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna (SOLAS)	Cathriona Halahan	26/10/2013		25/10/2018	Ordinary Member	F	PAS Process
An tSeirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna (SOLAS)	Cecilia Munro	26/10/2013	27/10/2017	26/10/2022	Ordinary Member	F	PAS Process

Questions - Written Answers

Body	Name (Identify Chair)	Date Ap- pointed	Date of Reap- pointment	Date Appoint- ment Ceases	Position Type	Gender	Basis of appoint- ment (e.g. Pas Process, Ex-Officio, Employee Repre- sentative)
An tSeirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna (SOLAS)	Darragh Loftus	27/10/2013	27/10/2016	26/10/2021	Ordinary Member	M	Appointed by Minister - First appointment via the PAS process
An tSeirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna (SOLAS)	Sinead Mc-Cluskey	27/10/2017		26/10/2022	Ordinary Member	F	Appointed by the Minister - PAS process
An tSeirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna (SOLAS)	Patrick Dwyer	27/10/2017		26/10/2022	Ordinary Member	M	Appointed by the Minister - PAS process
An tSeirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna (SOLAS)	Catrina Sheridan	27/10/2017		26/10/2022	Ordinary Member	F	Appointed by the Minister - PAS Process
An tSeirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna (SOLAS)	Pat Delaney	26/10/2013		26/10/2018	Chairperson	M	Appointed by Minister for Education & Skills following consultation with the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation and the Minister for Social Protection
An tSeirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna (SOLAS)	Patricia Carey	26/10/2013	27/10/2017	26/10/2022	Ordinary Member	F	PAS Process
An tSeirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna (SOLAS)	Paul O'Sullivan	26/10/2013	27/10/2017	26/10/2022	Ordinary Member	M	Nominee of the Minister for Social Protection
An tSeirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna (SOLAS)	Paul O'Toole	09/10/2013		25/10/2018	Ex-officio, CEO	M	Appointed by Minister for Education & Skills following consultation with the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation and the Minister for Social Protection
An tSeirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna (SOLAS)	Seán Burke	26/10/2013	27/10/2017	27/10/2022	Ordinary Member	M	PAS Process
An tSeirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna (SOLAS)	William Egerton	26/10/2013		25/10/2018	Ordinary Member	M	Nominee of the Minister for Social Protection
Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse (CICA)	Anne Mc Loughlin	23/01/2002		When Commission is dissolved by the Minister	Ordinary member	F	Ministerial Appointment -Appointment renewed pending closure of Commission

Body	Name (Identify Chair)	Date Ap- pointed	Date of Reap- pointment	Date Appoint- ment Ceases	Position Type	Gender	Basis of appoint- ment (e.g. Pas Process, Ex-Officio, Employee Repre- sentative)
Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse (CICA)	Fred Lowe	23/05/2000		When Commission is dissolved by the Minister	Ordinary member	M	Ministerial Appointment -Appointment renewed pending closure of Commission
Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse (CICA)	Marion Shanley	21/07/2004		When Commission is dissolved by the Minister	Ordinary member	F	Ministerial Appointment -Appointment renewed pending closure of Commission
Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse (CICA)	Mary Fennessy	19/04/2002		When Commission is dissolved by the Minister	Ordinary member	F	Ministerial Appointment -Appointment renewed pending closure of Commission
Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse (CICA)	Sean Ryan (Judge)	26/09/2003		When Commission is dissolved by the Minister	Ordinary member	M	Ministerial Appointment -Appointment renewed pending closure of Commission
Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse (CICA)	Norah Gibbons	23/05/2000		When Commission is dissolved by the Minister	Ordinary Member	F	Ministerial Appointment -Appointment renewed pending closure of Commission
Educational Research Centre (ERC)	Denise Burns, Dr	13/07/2016		12/07/2021	Deputy Chair	F	PAS Process
Educational Research Centre (ERC)	Edward Murtagh	13/07/2016		12/07/2021	Ordinary Member	M	PAS Process
Educational Research Centre (ERC)	Jude Cosgrove, Dr	13/07/2016		12/07/2021	Ordinary Member	F	PAS Process
Educational Research Centre (ERC)	Michael Martin, Professor	13/07/2016		12/07/2021	Ordinary Member	M	PAS Process
Educational Research Centre (ERC)	Pauric Travers, Dr	13/07/2016		12/07/2021	Chair	M	PAS Process
Grangegorman Development Agency	Berna Grist (Dr.)	11/09/15		08/09/2018	Ordinary member	F	PAS Process
Grangegorman Development Agency	Damien Kilgannon	15/01/2013	11/09/15	08/09/2018	Ordinary member	M	PAS Process
Grangegorman Development Agency	Deirdre Prince	15/01/2013	11/09/15	08/09/2018	Ordinary member	F	Appointed by Minister for Education & Skills
Grangegorman Development Agency	Denise Dunphy	11/09/15		08/09/2018	Ordinary member	F	Appointed by the Minister for Education and Skills on the Nomination by President, Dublin Institute of Technology
Grangegorman Development Agency	Elva Duffy	15/01/2013	11/09/15	08/09/2018	Ordinary member	F	Appointed by Minister for Education & Skills
Grangegorman Development Agency	Gerry O'Neill	11/09/15		08/09/2018	Ordinary member	M	Appointed by the Minister for Education and Skills on the Nomination by Minister for Health

Questions - Written Answers

Body	Name (Identify Chair)	Date Appointed	Date of Reappointment	Date Appointment Ceases	Position Type	Gender	Basis of appointment (e.g. Pas Process, Ex-Officio, Employee Representative)
Grangegorman Development Agency	James Owen Lewis (Prof.)	11/09/15		08/09/2018	Ordinary member	M	PAS Process
Grangegorman Development Agency	Janice Boylan (Cllr)	16/09/2014	11/09/15	08/09/2018	Ordinary member	F	Appointed by the Minister for Education and Skills on the Nomination by Dublin City Council
Grangegorman Development Agency	Jim Curran	15/01/2013	11/09/15	08/09/2018	Ordinary member	M	Appointed by the Minister for Education and Skills on the Nomination by Minister for Health
Grangegorman Development Agency	John O'Hara	11/09/15		08/09/2018	Ordinary member	M	Appointed by the Minister for Education and Skills on the Nomination by Dublin City Council
Grangegorman Development Agency	Ger Casey CEO	13/07/2016		08/09/2018	Ordinary member	M	Appointed by the Minister for Education and Skills on the Nomination by Dublin City Council.
Grangegorman Development Agency	Noel O'Connor (Dr)	15/01/2013	11/09/15	08/09/2018	Ordinary member	M	Appointed by the Minister for Education and Skills on the Nomination by President, Dublin Institute of Technology
Grangegorman Development Agency	Oliver Cussen	11/09/15		08/09/2018	Chairperson	M	PAS Process

table cont.

Body	Name (Identify Chart)	Date Appointed	Date of Reappointment	Date Appointment Ceases	Position Type	Gender	Body of appointment (e.g. Pas Process, Ex-Officio, Employee Representative)
Grangegorman Development Agency	Penelope Kenny	11/09/15		08/09/2018	Ordinary member	F	PAS Process
Grangegorman Development Agency	Alec Darragh	02/11/15		08/09/2018	Ordinary member	M	Resident of Grangegorman Neighbourhood
Higher Education Authority (HEA)	Michael Kerrigan	01/07/2017		30/06/2018	Ordinary Member	M	President of USI appointed by Government on recommendation of Minister.
Higher Education Authority (HEA)	Bahram Bekradnia	06/03/2012	20/06/2017	19/06/2022	Ordinary Member	M	Appointed by Government on recommendation of Minister
Higher Education Authority (HEA)	Jim Mountjoy (Dr)	06/03/2012	20/06/2017	19/06/2022	Ordinary Member	M	Appointed by Government on recommendation of Minister

Body	Name (Identity Chart)	Date Appointed	Date of Reappointment	Date Appointment Ceases	Position Type	Gender	Body of appointment (e.g. Pas Process, Ex-Officio, Employee Representative)
Higher Education Authority (HEA)	Darina Kneafsey	27/07/2016		26/07/2021	Ordinary Member	F	Appointed by Government on recommendation of Minister. PAS process.
Higher Education Authority (HEA)	John Wall (Dr)	27/07/2016		26/07/2021	Ordinary Member	M	Appointed by Government on recommendation of Minister. PAS process.
Higher Education Authority (HEA)	Judith Eaton	27/07/2016		26/07/2021	Ordinary Member	F	Appointed by Government on recommendation of Minister. PAS process.
Higher Education Authority (HEA)	Lynn Ramsey (Dr)	27/07/2016		26/07/2021	Ordinary Member	F	Appointed by Government on recommendation of Minister. PAS process.
Higher Education Authority (HEA)	Michael Horgan	27/07/2016		26/07/2021	Chairperson	M	Appointed by Government on recommendation of Minister. PAS process.
Higher Education Authority (HEA)	Orla Feely (Prof)	27/07/2016		26/07/2021	Ordinary Member	F	Appointed by Government on recommendation of Minister. PAS process.
Higher Education Authority (HEA)	Pól Ó Móráin	27/07/2016		26/07/2021	Ordinary Member	M	Appointed by Government on recommendation of Minister. PAS process.
Higher Education Authority (HEA)	Sharon Fee-ney (Dr)	27/07/2016		26/07/2021	Ordinary Member	F	Appointed by Government on recommendation of Minister. PAS process.
Higher Education Authority (HEA)	Sinéad O'Flanagan (Dr)	27/07/2016		26/07/2021	Ordinary Member	F	Appointed by Government on recommendation of Minister. PAS process.
Higher Education Authority (HEA)	Ronan Lyons (Dr)	awaiting confirmation		awaiting confirmation	Ordinary Member	M	Appointed by Government on recommendation of Minister. PAS process
Higher Education Authority (HEA)	Deirdre Lillis (Dr)	awaiting confirmation		awaiting confirmation	Ordinary Member	F	Appointed by Government on recommendation of Minister. PAS process

Questions - Written Answers

Body	Name (Identity Chart)	Date Appointed	Date of Reappointment	Date Appointment Ceases	Position Type	Gender	Body of appointment (e.g. Pas Process, Ex-Officio, Employee Representative)
Higher Education Authority (HEA)	Tony Donohoe	27/07/2016		26/07/2021	Ordinary Member	M	Appointed by Government on recommendation of Minister. PAS process.
Irish Research Council	Alan F. Smeaton (Prof.)	19/03/2012	19/03/2015	18/03/2018	Ordinary Member	M	Ministerial Appointment
Irish Research Council	Debra Laefer (Dr.)	01/09/2016		31/08/2019	Ordinary Member	F	PAS Process
Irish Research Council	Ursula Kilkenny (Prof.)	01/09/2016		31/08/2019	Ordinary Member	F	PAS Process
Irish Research Council	Peter Brown	n/a		n/a	Ex Officio	M	Director of IRC (acting)
Irish Research Council	James Gleeson (Prof.)	26/11/2012	19/03/2015	18/03/2018	Ordinary Member	M	Ministerial Appointment
Irish Research Council	Kiernan Conboy (Dr.)	01/09/2016		31/08/2019	Ordinary Member	M	PAS Process
Irish Research Council	Emma Teeling (Assoc. Prof.)	08/09/2015		06/09/2018	Ordinary Member	F	PAS Process
Irish Research Council	Eithne McCabe (Prof.)	08/09/2015		06/09/2018	Ordinary Member	F	PAS Process
Irish Research Council	Rob Kitchin (Prof.)	08/09/2015		06/09/2018	Ordinary Member	M	PAS Process
Irish Research Council	Felicity Kelliher (Dr.)	08/09/2015		06/09/2018	Ordinary Member	F	PAS Process
Irish Research Council	Jane Ohlmeyer (Prof.)	08/09/2015		06/09/2018	Chairperson	F	PAS Process
Irish Research Council	Daniel Carey (Prof.)	01/09/2016		31/08/2019	Ordinary Member	M	PAS process
Léargas	Des O'Loughlin	26/01/2010	21/09/2016; 24/04/2013	20/09/2019	Ordinary Member	M	Ministerial appointment - Ex- Officio
Léargas	Michael McLoughlin	12/06/2012	07/06/2017; 24/04/2014	07/06/2020	Chairperson	M	Ministerial appointment
Léargas	Hugh McConville	12/06/2012	29/04/2015	29/04/2018	Ordinary Member	M	Ministerial appointment
Léargas	James Doorley	23/11/2012	29/04/2015	29/04/2018	Ordinary Member	M	Ministerial appointment
Léargas	Jean Marie Cullen	07.06.2017		07/06/2020	Ordinary Member	F	Ministerial appointment
Léargas	Fidelma Collins	12/06/2012	07/06/2017; 24/03/2014	07/06/2020	Ordinary Member	F	Ministerial appointment
Léargas	Maria Lorigan	24/04/2013	14/04/2015	29/04/2018	Ordinary Member	F	Ministerial appointment
Léargas	Stephen Goulding	12/06/2012	26/04/2016; 24/04/2014	26/04//2019	Ordinary Member	M	Ministerial appointment
Léargas	Maire Quinn	23/07/2013	26/04/2016	26/04/2019	Ordinary Member	F	Ministerial appointment
National Centre for Guidance Education (NCGE) Management Committee	Eddie McGrath	20/1/2017		31/12/2019	Ordinary Member	M	Nominee of the Institute of Guidance Councillors

Body	Name (Identity Chart)	Date Appointed	Date of Reappointment	Date Appointment Ceases	Position Type	Gender	Body of appointment (e.g. Pas Process, Ex-Officio, Employee Representative)
National Centre for Guidance Education (NCGE) Management Committee	Jim Mullin	26/07/2013	20/1/2017	31/12/2019	Ordinary Member	M	Nominee of Léargas
National Centre for Guidance Education (NCGE) Management Committee	Joe Cunningham	24/09/2015	20/1/2017	31/12/2019	Ordinary Member	M	Nominee of the Education and Training Boards Ireland
National Centre for Guidance Education (NCGE) Management Committee	Josephine McGread	20/1/2017		31/12/2019	Ordinary Member	F	Nominee of the Adult Education Guidance Association
National Centre for Guidance Education (NCGE) Management Committee	Karen Murtagh	20/1/2017		31/12/2019	Ordinary Member	F	Nominee of the Department of Education and Skills (1 admin)
National Centre for Guidance Education (NCGE) Management Committee	Kathy Finnegan	23/04/2015	20/1/2017	31/12/2019	Ordinary Member	F	Nominee of the National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals
National Centre for Guidance Education (NCGE) Management Committee	Linda Neary	24/09/2015	20/1/2017	31/12/2019	Ordinary Member	F	Nominee of the Department of Education and Skills (1 inspector)
National Centre for Guidance Education (NCGE) Management Committee	Maire Quinn	20/1/2017		31/12/2019	Ordinary Member	F	Nominee of Léargas
National Centre for Guidance Education (NCGE) Management Committee	Mary B. Ryan, Dr.	20/1/2017		31/12/2019	Ordinary Member	F	Nominated by the Minister to represent the Directors of Post-Graduate Guidance Training Courses
National Centre for Guidance Education (NCGE) Management Committee	Orla Christle	24/09/2015	20/1/2017	31/12/2019	Ordinary Member	F	Nominee of Higher Education Authority (HEA)

Questions - Written Answers

Body	Name (Identity Chart)	Date Appointed	Date of Reappointment	Date Appointment Ceases	Position Type	Gender	Body of appointment (e.g. Pas Process, Ex-Officio, Employee Representative)
National Centre for Guidance Education (NCGE) Management Committee	Paul King	26/07/2013	20/1/2017	31/12/2019	Chairperson	M	Minister for Education and Skills
National Centre for Guidance Education (NCGE) Management Committee	Roisin Doherty	23/10/2017		31/12/2019	Ordinary Member	F	Nominee of SOLAS
National Centre for Guidance Education (NCGE) Management Committee	Stephen Fitzgerald, Dr.	24/09/2015	20/1/2017	31/12/2019	Ordinary Member	M	Nominee of the Department of Social Protection
National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)	Tim Desmond	06/11/2017		31/12/2018	Ordinary Member	M	Nominee of the State Examinations Commission
National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)	Brigid McManus	01/04/2012	25/06/2015	31/12/2018	Chairperson	F	PAS Process
National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)	Clive Byrne	01/04/2012	25/06/2015	31/12/2018	Ordinary Member	M	PAS Process
National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)	David Duffy	25/06/2015		31/12/2018	Ordinary Member	M	Nominee of the Teachers' Union of Ireland (TUI)
National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)	David Leahy	25/06/2015		31/12/2018	Ordinary Member	M	Nominee of the Education and Training Board Ireland (ETBI)
National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)	Declan Kelleher	01/04/2012	25/06/2015	31/12/2018	Vice-Chairperson	M	Nominee of the Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO)
National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)	Deirbhile Nic Craith	01/04/2012	25/06/2015	31/12/2018	Ordinary Member	F	Nominee of the Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO)
National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)	Don Myers	25/06/2015		31/12/2018	Ordinary Member	M	Nominee of the National Parents Council (NPC) (Post Primary)

Body	Name (Identity Chart)	Date Appointed	Date of Reappointment	Date Appointment Ceases	Position Type	Gender	Body of appointment (e.g. Pas Process, Ex-Officio, Employee Representative)
National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)	Emma Dineen	25/06/2015		31/12/2018	Ordinary Member	F	Nominee of the Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO)
National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)	Joanne Irwin	25/06/2015		31/12/2018	Ordinary Member	F	Nominee of the Teachers' Union of Ireland (TUI)
National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)	Patricia Harrington	14/09/2016		31/12/2018	Ordinary Member	F	Nominee of the National Association of Boards of Management in Special Education (NABMSE)
National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)	Kevin Marshall	25/06/2015		31/12/2018	Ordinary Member	M	Nominee of the Irish Business and Employers Confederation (IBEC)
National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)	Máire Ní Chiarba	25/06/2015		31/12/2018	Ordinary Member	F	Nominee of the Association of Secondary Teachers, Ireland (ASTI)
National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)	Maria Spring	25/06/2015		31/12/2018	Ordinary Member	F	Nominee of the Catholic Primary Schools Management Association (CPSMA)
National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)	Marie Therese Kilmartin	01/04/2012	25/06/2015	31/12/2018	Ordinary Member	F	Nominee of the Joint Managerial Body (JMB)
National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)	Michael Delargey	25/06/2015		31/12/2018	Ordinary Member	M	Nominee of the Irish Federation of University Teachers (IFUT)
National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)	Michael Redmond	01/04/2012	25/06/2015	31/12/2018	Vice-Chairperson	M	Nominee of the Joint Managerial Body (JMB)
National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)	Suzanne Dillon	25/09/2016		31/12/2018	Ordinary Member	F	Nominee of the Department of Education and Skills
National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)	Pádraig Ó Duibhir	25/06/2015		31/12/2018	Ordinary Member	M	Nominee of Foras na Gaeilge

Questions - Written Answers

Body	Name (Identity Chart)	Date Appointed	Date of Reappointment	Date Appointment Ceases	Position Type	Gender	Body of appointment (e.g. Pas Process, Ex-Officio, Employee Representative)
National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)	Philip Irwin	01/04/2012	25/06/2015	31/12/2018	Ordinary Member	M	Nominee of the Association of Secondary Teachers, Ireland (ASTI)
National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)	Rose Malone	01/04/2012	25/06/2015	31/12/2018	Ordinary Member	F	Nominee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU)
National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)	Rosemary Eager	01/04/2012	25/06/2015	31/12/2018	Ordinary Member	F	Nominee of the Church of Ireland Board of Education
National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)	Áine Lynch	25/06/2015		31/12/2018	Ordinary Member	F	Nominee of the National Parents Council (NPC) (Primary)
National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)	Áine O'Sullivan	25/06/2015		31/12/2018	Ordinary Member	F	Nominee of the Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools (ACCS)
National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)	Avril McMonagle	25/06/2015		31/12/2018	Ordinary Member	F	PAS Process
National Council for Special Education (NCSE)	Aine Lynch	27/07/2016		31/12/2018	Ordinary Member	F	Nominee of the National Primary Parents Association, in accordance with Section 21(3) of EPSEN Act. Appointed by the Minister.
National Council for Special Education (NCSE)	Anne Tansey	27/07/2016		31/12/2018	Ordinary Member	F	Nominee of the Minister for Education and Skills. Official of the Department. Appointed by the Minister.
National Council for Special Education (NCSE)	Antoinette Mac Gearailt	27/07/2016		31/12/2018	Ordinary Member	F	Nominee of the Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools, in accordance with Section 21(3) of EPSEN Act.

Body	Name (Identity Chart)	Date Appointed	Date of Reappointment	Date Appointment Ceases	Position Type	Gender	Body of appointment (e.g. Pas Process, Ex-Officio, Employee Representative)
National Council for Special Education (NCSE)	Don Mahon	27/07/2016		31/12/2018	Ordinary Member	M	PAS Process - Appointed by the Minister.
National Council for Special Education (NCSE)	Eamonn Stack	01/01/2013	08/01/2016	31/12/2018	Chairperson	M	Appointed by Minister - First appointment via the PAS process
National Council for Special Education (NCSE)	Eithne Fitzgerald	01/01/2013	27/07/2016	31/12/2018	Ordinary Member	F	Appointed by Minister. Nominee of National Disability Authority. In accordance with Section 21(4)(a) of EPSSEN Act.
National Council for Special Education (NCSE)	Finian O'Shea (Dr.)	27/07/2016		31/12/2018	Ordinary Member	M	Nominee of the Church of Ireland College of Education in accordance with Section 21(3) of EPSSEN Act. Appointed by Minister.
National Council for Special Education (NCSE)	Helen Guinan	01/01/2013	27/07/2016	31/12/2018	Ordinary Member	F	Appointed by Minister. Nominee of the Catholic Primary School Management Association (CPSMA)/ National Association of Boards of Management in Special Education (NABMSE). Appointed by Minister in Accordance with Section 21 (3) of EPSSEN Act.
National Council for Special Education (NCSE)	Joe Hayes	27/07/2016		31/12/2018	Ordinary Member	M	PAS Process. Appointed by Minister.
National Council for Special Education (NCSE)	Marion Meaney	27/07/2016		31/12/2018	Ordinary Member	F	Nominee of the Minister for Health under the PAS Process. Appointed by Minister.

Questions - Written Answers

Body	Name (Identity Chart)	Date Appointed	Date of Reappointment	Date Appointment Ceases	Position Type	Gender	Body of appointment (e.g. Pas Process, Ex-Officio, Employee Representative)
National Council for Special Education (NCSE)	Seán Ó Murchú	01/01/2013	27/07/2016	31/12/2018	Ordinary Member	M	Appointed by Minister - First appointment via the PAS process
National Council for Special Education (NCSE)	Sheelagh Drudy (Prof.)	11/09/2013	27/07/2016	31/12/2018	Ordinary Member	F	Appointed by Minister - First appointment via the PAS process

table cont.

National Council for Special Education (NCSE)	Tom O'Sullivan	14/10/2014	27/07/2016	31/12/2018	Ordinary Member	M	Appointed by Minister. Nominee of National Disability Authority, in accordance with Section 21(4)(a) of EPSEN Act.
Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)	Vacancy			05/11/2017	Ordinary Member		Ministerial Appointee
Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)	Barbara Brittingham (Dr.)	06/11/2012	06/11/2017	05/11/2022	Ordinary Member	F	Ministerial Appointee (international expert)
Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)	Vacancy			05/11/2017	Chairperson		Ministerial Appointee.
Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)	Oisín Hassan	21/07/2017	06/11/2017	05/11/2022	Ordinary Member	M	Appointed by Minister on nomination of USI as representative of learners
Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)	Vacancy			05/11/2017	Ordinary Member		Ministerial Appointee
Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)	Joanne Harmon	06/11/2012	06/11/2017	05/11/2022	Ordinary Member	F	Ministerial Appointee
Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)	Mary Dagher	06/11/2012	06/11/2017	05/11/2022	Ordinary Member	F	Ministerial Appointee
Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)	Padraig Walsh (Dr.)	06/11/2012	06/11/2017	05/11/2017	Ordinary Member	M	Chief Executive ex officio
Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)	Thomas McDermott	15/06/2015	06/11/2017	05/11/2022	Ordinary Member	M	Ministerial Appointee - First appointment via the PAS process
Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)	Vacancy	0		05/11/2017	Ordinary Member		Ministerial Appointee (learner representative)

National Council for Special Education (NCSE)	Tom O'Sullivan	14/10/2014	27/07/2016	31/12/2018	Ordinary Member	M	Appointed by Minister. Nominee of National Disability Authority, in accordance with Section 21(4)(a) of EPSEN Act.
Residential Institutions Redress Board (RIRB)	Ann O'Brien	01/06/2014		Until 30th November 2016 or until the Board ceases operations, whichever is the soonest	Ordinary Member	F	Ministerial Appt - Appointment renewed pending closure of Board
Residential Institutions Redress Board (RIRB)	Dariona Conlon	01/06/2014		Until 30th November 2016 or until the Board ceases operations, whichever is the soonest	Ordinary Member	F	Ministerial Appt - Appointment renewed pending closure of Board
Residential Institutions Redress Board (RIRB)	Esmond Smyth (Judge)	07/01/2008		Until the Board ceases operations.	Chairperson	M	Ministerial Appt - Appointment renewed pending closure of Board
Residential Institutions Redress Board (RIRB)	Fionnuala O'Loughlin (Dr)	01/06/2014		Until 30th November 2016 or until the Board ceases operations, whichever is the soonest	Ordinary Member	F	Ministerial Appt - Appointment renewed pending closure of Board
Residential Institutions Redress Board (RIRB)	Harry Bugler (Dr)	01/06/2014		Until 30th November 2016 or until the Board ceases operations, whichever is the soonest	Ordinary Member	M	Ministerial Appt - Appointment renewed pending closure of Board
Residential Institutions Redress Board (RIRB)	Helen Cumiskey (Dr)	01/06/2014		Until 30th November 2016 or until the Board ceases operations, whichever is the soonest	Ordinary Member	F	Ministerial Appt - Appointment renewed pending closure of Board
Residential Institutions Redress Board (RIRB)	John Campbell	01/06/2014		Until 30th November 2016 or until the Board ceases operations, whichever is the soonest	Ordinary Member	M	Ministerial Appt - Appointment renewed pending closure of Board
Residential Institutions Redress Board (RIRB)	Mary Bluett (Dr)	01/06/2014		Until 30th November 2016 or until the Board ceases operations, whichever is the soonest	Ordinary Member	F	Ministerial Appt - Appointment renewed pending closure of Board
Residential Institutions Redress Board (RIRB)	Ruth Pilkington (Dr)	01/06/2014		Until 30th November 2016 or until the Board ceases operations, whichever is the soonest	Ordinary Member	F	Ministerial Appt - Appointment renewed pending closure of Board

Questions - Written Answers

National Council for Special Education (NCSE)	Tom O'Sullivan	14/10/2014	27/07/2016	31/12/2018	Ordinary Member	M	Appointed by Minister. Nominee of National Disability Authority, in accordance with Section 21(4)(a) of EPSEN Act.
Residential Institutions Redress Board (RIRB)	Samantha Cruess Callaghan	01/06/2014		Until 30th November 2016 or until the Board ceases operations, whichever is the soonest	Ordinary Member	F	Ministerial Appt - Appointment renewed pending closure of Board
Residential Institutions Redress Board (RIRB)	William Delaney (Dr)	01/06/2014		Until 30th November 2016 or until the Board ceases operations, whichever is the soonest	Ordinary Member	M	Ministerial Appt - Appointment renewed pending closure of Board
Residential Institutions Review Committee (RIRC)	Brendan Gogarty	01/06/2014		Until 30th November 2016 or until the Board ceases operations, whichever is the soonest	Ordinary Member	M	Ministerial Appointment -Appointment renewed pending closure of Commission
Residential Institutions Review Committee (RIRC)	Colm Gaynor	01/06/2014		Until 30th November 2016 or until the Board ceases operations, whichever is the soonest	Ordinary Member	M	Ministerial Appointment -Appointment renewed pending closure of Commission
Residential Institutions Review Committee (RIRC)	Francis D. Murphy (Judge)	31/05/2014		Until 30th November 2016 or until the Board ceases operations, whichever is the soonest	Chairperson	M	Ministerial Appointment -Appointment renewed pending closure of Commission
Residential Institutions Review Committee (RIRC)	Ita Mangan	01/06/2014		Until 30th November 2016 or until the Board ceases operations, whichever is the soonest	Ordinary Member	F	Ministerial Appointment -Appointment renewed pending closure of Commission
Residential Institutions Review Committee (RIRC)	John Dalton	01/06/2014		Until 30th November 2016 or until the Board ceases operations, whichever is the soonest	Ordinary Member	M	Ministerial Appointment -Appointment renewed pending closure of Commission
Residential Institutions Review Committee (RIRC)	Vacancy			Until 30th November 2016 or until the Board ceases operations, whichever is the soonest	Ordinary Member		Ministerial Appointment -Appointment renewed pending closure of Commission
Residential Institutions Statutory Fund Board (RISF) Caranua	Damian Casey	25/03/2013	25/05/2017	24/03/2021	Ordinary Member	M	PAS Process

National Council for Special Education (NCSE)	Tom O'Sullivan	14/10/2014	27/07/2016	31/12/2018	Ordinary Member	M	Appointed by Minister. Nominee of National Disability Authority, in accordance with Section 21(4)(a) of EPSEN Act.
Residential Institutions Statutory Fund Board (RISF) Caranua	David O'Callaghan	25/02/2014	25/03/2017	24/03/2021	Chairperson	M	Ministerial Appointment
Residential Institutions Statutory Fund Board (RISF) Caranua	Frances Harrington	29/01/2014	25/05/2017	24/03/2021	Ordinary Member	F	PAS Process
Residential Institutions Statutory Fund Board (RISF) Caranua	Francis W. Treanor BL	25/05/2017		24/03/2021	Ordinary Member	M	PAS Process
Residential Institutions Statutory Fund Board (RISF) Caranua	Katherine Finn BL	25/03/2013	25/05/2017	24/03/2021	Ordinary Member	F	PAS Process
Residential Institutions Statutory Fund Board (RISF) Caranua	Mary T. Lodato	25/05/2017		24/03/2021	Ordinary Member	F	PAS Process
Residential Institutions Statutory Fund Board (RISF) Caranua	Patricia Carey	25/05/2017		24/03/2021	Ordinary Member	F	PAS Process
Residential Institutions Statutory Fund Board (RISF) Caranua	Thomas Cronin	25/05/2017		24/03/2021	Ordinary Member	M	PAS Process
Residential Institutions Statutory Fund Board (RISF) Caranua	Thomas Daly	25/03/2013	25/05/2017	24/03/2021	Ordinary Member	M	PAS Process
Skillnets Ltd	Brendan McGinty	08/09/2004		n/a	Chairperson	M	Nominee of the Irish Business and Employers Confederation (IBEC)
Skillnets Ltd	David Delaney	12/02/2015		n/a	Ordinary Member	M	Nominee of the Irish Business and Employers Confederation (IBEC)

Questions - Written Answers

National Council for Special Education (NCSE)	Tom O'Sullivan	14/10/2014	27/07/2016	31/12/2018	Ordinary Member	M	Appointed by Minister. Nominee of National Disability Authority, in accordance with Section 21(4)(a) of EPSEN Act.
Skillnets Ltd	Eamonn Devoy	08/12/2011		n/a	Ordinary Member	M	Nominee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU)
Skillnets Ltd	George Hennessy	04/02/2010		n/a	Ordinary Member	M	Nominee of the Construction Industry Federation
Skillnets Ltd	Thomas Cooney	07/09/2017		n/a	Ordinary Member	M	Representative nominated by the Minister, to serve as a Director
Skillnets Ltd	Ian Talbot	11/09/2008		n/a	Ordinary Member	M	Nominee of Chambers Ireland
Skillnets Ltd	Kara McCann	12/02/2015		n/a	Ordinary Member	F	Nominee of the Irish Business and Employers Confederation (IBEC)
Skillnets Ltd	Karl McDonagh	08/12/2011		n/a	Ordinary Member	M	Nominee of the Irish Business and Employers Confederation (IBEC)
Skillnets Ltd	Mairead Divilly	01/02/1999		n/a	Ordinary Member	F	Nominee of the Small Firms Association (SFA)]
Skillnets Ltd	Nuala Keher	01/02/1999		n/a	Ordinary Member	F	Nominee of Lionra, Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU)
Skillnets Ltd	Peter Rigney	01/02/1999		n/a	Ordinary Member	M	Nominee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) - employee
Skillnets Ltd	Yvonne McNulty	07/09/2017		n/a	Ordinary Member	F	Representative nominated by the Minister, to serve as a Director
Skillnets Ltd	Fiona Walsh	07/09/2017		n/a	Ordinary Member	F	Representative nominated by the Minister, to serve as a Director

National Council for Special Education (NCSE)	Tom O'Sullivan	14/10/2014	27/07/2016	31/12/2018	Ordinary Member	M	Appointed by Minister. Nominee of National Disability Authority, in accordance with Section 21(4)(a) of EPSEN Act.
State Examinations Commission	Martin Sisk	12/10/2017		30/11/2018	Ordinary Member	M	Appointed by the Government on nomination of the Minister for Education and Skills
State Examinations Commission	Mary Ryan	15/05/2015		30/11/2018	Deputy Chairperson	F	Appointed by the Government on nomination of the Minister for Education and Skills
State Examinations Commission	Patrick Burke	15/05/2015		30/11/2018	Chairperson	M	Appointed by the Government on nomination of the Minister for Education and Skills
State Examinations Commission	Richard Thorn (Dr.)	15/05/2015		30/11/2018	Ordinary Member	M	Appointed by the Government on nomination of the Minister for Education and Skills
State Examinations Commission	Teresa O'Doherty (Prof)	15/05/2015		30/11/2018	Ordinary Member	F	Appointed by the Government on nomination of the Minister for Education and Skills
The Teaching Council	Áine Lynch	28/03/2012	04/04/2016	03/04/2018	Ordinary Member	F	Nominee of National Parents Council (P) NPC
The Teaching Council	Catherine Doolan	04/04/2016		03/04/2020	Ordinary Member	F	Nominee of Primary Leinster
The Teaching Council	Claire Markey	04/04/2016		03/04/2018	Ordinary Member	F	Nominee Teachers' Union of Ireland (TUI)
The Teaching Council	Colm Harte	04/04/2016		03/04/2020	Ordinary Member	M	Nominee of Primary Leinster
The Teaching Council	Declan Kelleher	28/03/2012	04/04/2016	03/04/2018	Ordinary Member	M	Nominee of the Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO)
The Teaching Council	Deirdre O'Connor	04/04/2016		03/04/2018	Ordinary Member	F	Nominee of the Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO)

Questions - Written Answers

National Council for Special Education (NCSE)	Tom O'Sullivan	14/10/2014	27/07/2016	31/12/2018	Ordinary Member	M	Appointed by Minister. Nominee of National Disability Authority, in accordance with Section 21(4)(a) of EPSEN Act.
The Teaching Council	Denis Magner	04/04/2016		03/04/2020	Ordinary Member	M	Nominee of the Education and Training Board (ETB) Leinster
The Teaching Council	Eamonn Shaughnessy	04/04/2016		03/04/2020	Ordinary Member	M	Nominee of Primary Connaught/Ulster
The Teaching Council	Elizabeth Cooney	04/04/2016		03/04/2020	Ordinary Member	F	Nominee of Vol Post Primary Connaught, Munster & Ulster
The Teaching Council	Ferdia Kelly	04/04/2016		03/04/2018	Ordinary Member	M	Nominee of School Management PP - JMB
The Teaching Council	Frank Turpin	28/03/2012	04/04/2016	03/04/2020	Ordinary Member	M	Nominee of Irish Business and Employers Confederation (IBEC)
The Teaching Council	Gerry Quinn	04/04/2016		03/04/2018	Ordinary Member	M	Nominee of Teachers' Union of Ireland (TUI)
The Teaching Council	Gregor Kerr	04/04/2016		03/04/2020	Ordinary Member	M	Nominee of Primary Dublin
The Teaching Council	John Holian	04/04/2016		03/04/2018	Ordinary Member	M	Nominee of Association of Secondary Teachers, Ireland (ASTI)
The Teaching Council	Karen Devine	04/04/2016		03/04/2020	Ordinary Member	F	Nominee of Primary Connaught/Ulster
The Teaching Council	Maire Lineen	04/04/2016		03/04/2020	Ordinary Member	F	Nominee of Primary Dublin
The Teaching Council	Mairéad Glynn	04/04/2016		03/04/2020	Ordinary Member	F	Nominee of Comm. & Comp. - All of Ireland
The Teaching Council	Mary Fleming, Dr.	04/04/2016		03/04/2018	Ordinary Member	F	Nominee of Universities & Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)
The Teaching Council	Mary O'Sullivan, Prof	04/04/2016		03/04/2018	Ordinary Member	F	Nominee of Universities & Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)

National Council for Special Education (NCSE)	Tom O'Sullivan	14/10/2014	27/07/2016	31/12/2018	Ordinary Member	M	Appointed by Minister. Nominee of National Disability Authority, in accordance with Section 21(4)(a) of EPSEN Act.
The Teaching Council	Michael Delargey	04/04/2016		03/04/2020	Ordinary Member	M	Nominee of Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU)
The Teaching Council	Niall Duddy	04/04/2016		03/04/2020	Ordinary Member	M	Nominee of Vol Post Primary Connaught, Munster & Ulster
The Teaching Council	Noelle Moran	04/04/2016		03/04/2018	Ordinary Member	F	Nominee of the Association of Secondary Teachers, Ireland (ASTI)
The Teaching Council	Pat Gilmore	04/04/2016		03/04/2018	Ordinary Member	M	Nominee of School Management PP - ETBI
The Teaching Council	Patricia Duffy	04/04/2016		03/04/2020	Ordinary Member	F	Nominee of Vol Post Primary Leinster
The Teaching Council	Paul Mooney	04/04/2016		03/04/2018	Ordinary Member	M	Nominee of National Parents Council (PP) NPC
The Teaching Council	Seamus O Fearraigh	04/04/2016		03/04/2020	Ordinary Member	M	Nominee of Education & Training Board (ETB) Connaught, Munster & Ulster
The Teaching Council	Séamus O'Connor	04/04/2016		03/04/2020	Ordinary Member	M	Nominee of Primary Munster
The Teaching Council	Sean McMahon	04/04/2016		03/04/2020	Deputy Chairperson	M	Nominee of Primary Munster
The Teaching Council	Séan O'Neill	04/04/2016		03/04/2020	Ordinary Member	M	Nominee of Vol Post Primary Leinster
The Teaching Council	Seamus Mulcrony	05/07/2016		03/04/2018	Ordinary Member	M	Nominee of School Management (P) Catholic Primary Schools Management Association (CPSMA)
The Teaching Council	Tracie Tobin	04/04/2016		03/04/2020	Ordinary Member	F	Nominee of Primary Munster
The Teaching Council	Yvonne Ní Mhurchu	04/04/2016		03/04/2018	Ordinary Member	F	Nominee of PP Post Primary Gael-scoileanna

Questions - Written Answers

National Council for Special Education (NCSE)	Tom O'Sullivan	14/10/2014	27/07/2016	31/12/2018	Ordinary Member	M	Appointed by Minister. Nominee of National Disability Authority, in accordance with Section 21(4)(a) of EPSEN Act.
The Teaching Council	Anne O'Gara	31/05/2016		03/04/2018	Ordinary Member	F	Nominee of P ITE University 5 Colleges of Education
The Teaching Council	Martin Lally	31/05/2016		03/04/2020	Ordinary Member	M	Minister Rep Department of Education and Skills
The Teaching Council	Pádraig O Duibhir	31/05/2016		03/04/2018	Ordinary Member	M	Nominee of P ITE University 5 Colleges of Education
The Teaching Council	Peter Finnegan	04/10/2016		03/04/2020	Ordinary Member	M	PAS Process
The Teaching Council	Vacancy			October 2016	Ordinary Member		Vacancy will be filled following PAS process

Special Educational Needs Service Provision

163. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a secondary school (details supplied) in County Cork with an ASD unit will be enrolling new children into first year for the 2018-2019 school year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49955/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): It is the policy of my Department that all children with Special Educational Needs, including those with Autism, can have access to an education appropriate to their needs, preferably in school settings through the primary and post primary school network.

Such placements facilitate access to individualised education programmes which may draw from a range of appropriate educational interventions, delivered by fully qualified professional teachers, with the support of Special Needs Assistants and the appropriate school curriculum.

This policy has been informed by published research, including the Report of the Task Force on Autism (2001), the Evaluation of Educational Provision for Children with Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASD) (2006) and National Council for Special Education (NCSE) policy advice on Supporting Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (2016).

The NCSE policy advice on Supporting Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (2016) found that Students are generally well supported in schools with appropriate curriculum; extensive teacher and SNA supports; improving range of educational placements supported by improved accommodation and equipment; improved teacher knowledge and understanding and a generally good standard of provision at primary and post primary levels.

The NCSE policy advice noted that ASD is a spectrum condition, so some students with ASD require little support in school and are relatively independent in their learning, while others require significant levels of support.

The NCSE Policy Advice also states that International Research findings suggest that most students with ASD should be considered for inclusion in mainstream education with their peers, where inclusion is well-planned and well-resourced.

Decisions about placement should be based on individual needs and take into account a number of factors including parental wishes, availability of evidence-based treatments and well-trained staff and individual factors such as targets for intervention and management of behaviours.

There is therefore not one preferred educational environment for children with ASD, rather there is a model which takes into account the assessed educational needs of individual pupils.

As such, my Department's policy focuses on ensuring that all students, including those with autism spectrum disorders, can have access to an education appropriate to meeting their needs and abilities.

Some students, although academically able to access the curriculum in mainstream, may find it too difficult to manage full-time placement there. This can be due to significant difficulties in areas such as behaviour or sensory needs which have not been ameliorated, even with appropriate intervention, in mainstream.

Enrolment in an ASD special class should only be considered where it has been demonstrated that a student requires the support of a special class because he/she is unable to learn effectively in a mainstream class for most or all of the school day even with appropriate supports.

Students enrolling in ASD Special Classes must have a report from a relevant professional or team of professionals (for example, psychologist, speech and language therapist, psychiatrist) stating that:

- S/he has ASD

- S/he has significant learning needs that require the support of a special class setting and the reasons why this is the case.

The NCSE, through its network of local Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs), in consultation with the relevant education partners, is responsible for the establishment of special classes in various geographical areas where there is an identified need.

Since 2013/14 the NCSE has increased the number of post primary ASD special classes by over 100% from 124 in 2013/14 to 276 for the 2017/18 school year.

The continued growth in post primary special class numbers is a natural consequence of the earlier growth in primary special class numbers. However, it should not be assumed that the same levels of growth in post primary class numbers should apply. This is because, for children with Autism, transferring from a special class in a primary school to a special class in a post primary school may not always be the optimal choice. Many children can progress to mainstream post primary with support of SNA and Resource Teaching hours, while more may transfer from primary to a special school depending on their presentation and needs.

With regard to Carrigaline, there are 4 Post Primary ASD Special Classes, including 1 newly established class. The NCSE continues to review Post Primary special class placement requirements in the area and have informed my Department that they are currently satisfied that there are sufficient places to meet existing demand.

In order to identify need in the area for forthcoming school years, the NCSE refer to profes-

sional reports indicating students require the support of a special class. In this regard Parents/Guardians of students with ASD seeking a special class placement should provide the relevant professional report to their local Special Educational Needs Organiser (SENO) to inform the planning process.

The NCSE will continue to engage with schools in the area in opening ASD special classes in future years as required.

School Transport Appeals

164. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when a decision will issue to a person (details supplied) on their appeal for school transport. [49956/17]

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 over 114,000 children, including over 11,000 children with special educational needs, are being transported in over 4,500 vehicles on a daily basis to primary and post-primary schools throughout the country covering over 100 million kilometres annually.

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 school as determined by my Department/Bus Éireann, having regard to ethos and language.

Bus Éireann, which operates the school transport scheme on behalf of my Department, has advised that the child is not attending her nearest school and is therefore not eligible for school transport.

Children who are not eligible for school transport, may apply for transport on a concessionary 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.

In cases where distance eligibility is marginal or in dispute, vehicles fitted with calibrated measuring devices which measure the distance down to the nearest metre may be used to establish the exact distance and/or the nearest school to the child's home.

In this regard, Bus Éireann has been requested to carry out a calibrated measurement from the home of the child in question to the school attended.

Protected Disclosures

165. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of protected disclosures he has received since protected disclosures legislation entered into force; and the dates of the protected disclosures and organisations affected. [49967/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): In accordance with Section 22 of the Protected Disclosure Act 2014, my Department has published information on protected disclosures received during 2015 and 2016 on its website: <https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Corporate-Reports/Annual-Report/>

In summary, in 2015, 3 protected disclosures were received from workers in the Education sector. In 2016, 3 (1 anonymous) protected disclosures were received from workers in the Education sector. To date in 2017 there have been 11 (2 anonymous) protected disclosures received from workers in the Education sector. Details of the dates the protected disclosures were received and the organisations affected are provided in the table following.

There were no protected disclosures received from Department staff during the same period.

The information as requested by the Deputy is set out in the following table:

Bodies in the education sector

- non-commercial agencies;
- recognised schools;
- Education and Training Boards (ETBs);
- Education Centres and
- Higher level Institutions. (HEIs).

Year	Higher Level Institutions			Schools			
	Universities	Institutes of Technology	Non-commercial agencies	Primary	Post Primary	ETB Schools	Total
2015	2 [Note 1]	-	-	1	-	-	3
2016	-	1 [Note 2]	1 SOLAS		1 (anonymous)	-	3
2017	-	3 [Note 3]	1 NCCA	1	3 (1 anonymous)	3	11
Total	2	4	2	2	4	3	17

Note 1: 1. University of Limerick, 2. National University of Galway

Note 2: Waterford Institute of Technology

Note 3: 1. Dundalk Institute of Technology (anonymous), 2. Cork Institute of Technology, 3. Letterkenny Institute of Technology

Minor Works Scheme

166. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if there will be a minor works allocation to national schools in 2017; if so, when the allocations will be made; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49975/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The normal practice is for the Minor Works Grant to be announced towards the end of the year if funding permits.

Over the next number of weeks the issue of the Minor Works Grant 2017/2018 will be considered in the context of my Department's overall capital position.

Question No. 167 answered with Question No. 162.

Ministerial Communications

168. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he has used a private email account to send or receive official documents or positions on Brexit; and if so, the details of this correspondence. [50057/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I have not used a private email in such a way as is being suggested by the Deputy.

Minor Works Scheme

169. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a minor works grant for a school (details supplied) which was announced on 16 November 2016 will be granted; and if so, when; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50078/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The normal practice is for the Minor Works Grant to be announced towards the end of the year if funding permits.

Over the next number of weeks the issue of the Minor Works Grant 2017/2018 will be considered in the context of my Department's overall capital position.

School Accommodation

170. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of an application for additional accommodation by a school (details supplied). [50082/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I am pleased to inform the Deputy that the school to which he refers has been approved funding under my Department's Additional Accommodation Scheme to provide 1 mainstream classroom with en-suite facilities, 1 resource room and 1 WC for assisted users. The project has been devolved for delivery to the school authority. It is now a matter for the Board of Management to progress the project.

Schools Establishment

171. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the provision of a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50095/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): As the Deputy may be aware, where a requirement for additional post-primary schools has been identified, details including proposed timelines related to the opening of the schools are made known by a Ministerial announcement. However, patrons may decide for different operational reasons in a particular year that it is in the best interests of a new post-primary school to defer its opening. In some cases there may be a timing issue, where many parents will have already committed to other second level schools in the area ahead of the announcement of the new school.

The Patron of the new Malahide/Portmarnock post-primary school (Educate Together) decided for operational reasons that it was in the best interests of the school to postpone its open-

ing to September 2018. My Department will continue to work in close co-operation with the patron body to facilitate the opening of the school in suitable interim accommodation in September 2018.

My Department is continuing to liaise with officials in Fingal County Council in accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding in relation to the identification and acquisition of a suitable Permanent site for this school. As with other site acquisitions in the area, due to the scarcity of suitable sites, this process has proven to be quite challenging and in that context has taken some time to date. Potential site options have been identified. However, due to the commercial sensitivities relating to site acquisitions generally, I am not in a position to provide further details at this time.

Departmental Bodies Data

172. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the bodies under the aegis of his Department in which his Department provides in excess of €1 million funding per annum to these bodies; the public funding received by these bodies; the bodies in which 50% or more of its income comes from public sources; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50113/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The information requested by the Deputy is being collated and will be forwarded to the Deputy as soon as possible thereafter.

Schools Facilities

173. **Deputy Dessie Ellis** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans for a review of educational needs and facilities in view of the projected population increase; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50131/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): As the Deputy may be aware, in order to plan for school provision and analyse the relevant demographic data, my Department divides the country into 314 school planning areas. My Department uses a Geographical Information System (GIS) to identify where the pressure for school places across the country will arise. The GIS uses data from a range of sources, including the Central Statistics Office, Ordnance Survey Ireland, the Department of Social Protection and my Department's own databases. With this information, my Department carries out nationwide demographic exercises at primary and post primary level to determine where additional school accommodation is needed.

The demographic data for school planning areas nationwide is being reviewed by my Department to take account of updated child benefit data and updated enrolment data. It is anticipated that these exercises will be concluded shortly.

Where demographic data indicates that additional provision is required, the delivery of such additional provision is dependent on the particular circumstances of each case and may, depending on the circumstances, be provided through either one, or a combination of, the following:

- Utilising existing unused capacity within a school or schools,
- Extending the capacity of a school or schools,

- Provision of a new school or schools.

Once it has been established that a new school, primary or post-primary, is required to meet the demographic need in a school planning area, a separate process is conducted to establish who will run the school. It is open to all patron bodies and prospective patrons, to apply for patronage of a new school under the patronage process. Parental preferences for each patron, together with the extent of diversity currently available in the area, are key to decisions in relation to the outcome of this process. The process is fair, transparent and open to all patrons, patron bodies and prospective patrons to apply for patronage of any planned new school under this process.

Schools Inspections

174. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of primary schools; the number of secondary schools; the number of full-time physical education inspectors for both primary and second level schools nationally; the budget allocation for physical education inspections, including inspector salary bands, in each of the years 2013 to 2016 and to date in 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50133/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): In the school year 2016/17, there were 3,250 primary and 711 second-level schools aided by the Department of Education and Skills. Within the Inspectorate, there are fifty-three primary and fifty-four post-primary inspectors engaged in the inspection of schools. All primary inspectors are generalists who are competent to evaluate all eleven subjects on the Primary School Curriculum (1999), including Physical Education. Post-primary inspectors, while recruited as subject specialists, are competent to evaluate the quality of teaching and learning in all contexts at second level. Among the inspectors at post-primary level, there are two specialist inspectors of Physical Education.

There is no specific budget allocated for physical education inspections.

Salary bands for primary and post-primary inspectors are contained in the table.

EURO Payscales for Inspectorate Grade

Payscales								
EURO Payscales for Inspectorate Grades from 01/01/10 to 30/06/13	Post-Primary/Primary Inspector	€ 53,984	€ 56,326	€ 58,654	€ 60,963	€ 63,867	€ 68,210	
		€ 72,097	€ 76,036	€ 79,238	€ 81,720 (LSI 1)	€ 84,195 (LSI 2)		
	Post-Primary/Primary Inspector (PPC)*	€ 56,789	€ 59,246	€ 61,701	€ 64,128	€ 67,142	€ 71,671	
		€ 75,760	€ 79,912	€ 83,281	€ 85,884 (LSI 1)	€ 88,494 (LSI 2)		
EURO Payscales for Inspectorate Grades from 01/07/13 to 31/03/17	Post-Primary/Primary Inspector	€ 53,984	€ 56,326	€ 58,654	€ 60,963	€ 63,867	€ 65,000	
		€ 68,132	€ 71,854	€ 74,880	€ 77,182	€ 79,459		

Payscale								
	Post-Primary/Primary Inspector (PPC)	€ 51,110	€ 54,426	€ 56,789	€ 59,246	€ 61,701	€ 64,128	€ 65,000
		€ 67,729	€ 71,593	€ 75,517	€ 78,619	€ 81,013	€83,414	
EURO Payscale for Inspectorate Grades from 01/04/17 onwards	Primary / Post Primary	€ 54,984	€ 57,326	€ 59,654	€ 61,963	€ 64,867	€ 66,605	
		€ 70,115	€ 73,945	€ 77,059	€ 79,451	€ 81,827		
	Primary / Post Primary (PPC)	€52,110	€55,426	€ 57,789	€ 60,246	€ 62,701	€ 65,128	€ 66,071
		€ 69,700	€73,677	€ 77,715	€ 80,950	€ 83,449	€ 85,954	

*Personal pension contribution

Physical Education

175. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of primary schools and second level schools that have been visited by a physical education inspector in each of the years 2013 to 2016 and to date in 2017; and the powers the physical education inspector has to enforce recommendations made regarding the provision of school physical education following a review. [50134/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Primary school inspectors are not recruited as subject specialists. Primary inspectors evaluate Physical Education lessons in the course of a wide range of evaluation models.

At second level, post-primary inspectors visit Physical Education lessons within a number of inspection models. Specialist post-primary inspectors of Physical Education also conduct focused inspections of Physical Education and a number of follow-through inspections of Physical Education. In the years 2013-2017, 61 subject inspections and follow-through inspections of Physical Education were completed (2013: 17; 2014: 19; 2015: 6; 2016: 7; to date in 2017: 12).

Inspectors make recommendations arising from their evaluation of provision in a school. It is the responsibility of the Board of Management of a school to ensure that recommendations are addressed. Where recommendations relate to matters which are mandatory, and where a school does not address such matters, the Schools Division of the Department may follow-up with the Board or Patron of the school to ensure that the matter is addressed. The Inspectorate does not have powers to enforce recommendations made in inspection reports.

School Funding

176. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the funding made available to all primary and second level schools for the purchase of physical education related equipment in each of the years 2013 to 2016 and to date in 2017; the number of requests for physical education related funding in each of these years from primary and second level schools in each year, by type of equipment requests; and the budget allocation for physical education related equipment available in his department in each of these years. [50135/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The information requested by the Deputy is not available in the format requested.

My Department provides in excess of €21m each year toward the provision of furniture and equipment including PE equipment in primary and post-primary schools. Where my Department provided a GP room in a primary school or a sports hall in a post-primary school as part of a building project, the equipment provided forms part on the overall furniture and equipment grant to that school and the cost of PE equipment is not identified separately.

Furthermore it is open to primary schools to purchase PE equipment under their minor works grant allocation.

The types of PE equipment provided in primary schools are bar boxes, balancing benches, gymnastic mats, and climbing unit consisting of large trestles, small trestle, horizontal poles and ladders. In the post-primary sector my Department funds appropriate equipment for a fitness suite consisting of exercise bicycles, treadmills, rowing machine, and elliptical trainers as well general PE equipment.

Apprenticeship Programmes

177. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the 77 apprenticeships proposed to the Apprenticeship Council in its second call for new apprenticeships, in tabular form; the names of the shortlisted proposals that will be developed; the rationale for their selection; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50136/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan): A key commitment for this year set out in our Action Plan to Expand Apprenticeship and Traineeship 2016-2020 was the issuing of a second call for apprenticeship proposals to refresh the pipeline of proposals already established through the first call. The second call closed on the 1st September with 77 proposals received from a range of sectors and occupations.

Since the call closed, the Apprenticeship Council has evaluated and scored proposals against a set of published criteria which was published in conjunction with the second call. The evaluation process and criteria are available at http://www.apprenticeship.ie/en/apprentice/Shared%20Documents/Guidance_document.pdf. The Council is expected to report to me shortly on proposals that are recommended for development and details of these will be published in December.

I understand that the Council does not intend to publish details of proposals that are not recommended for development.

Special Educational Needs Service Provision

178. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the schools in the Dublin 8, 10 and 12 areas that have an autism spectrum disorder, ASD unit (details supplied). [50178/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): This Government is committed to ensuring that all children with Special Educational Needs, including those with autism, can have access to an education appropriate to their needs, preferably in school settings through the primary and post primary school network.

Such placements facilitate access to individualised education programmes which may draw from a range of appropriate educational interventions, delivered by fully qualified professional teachers, with the support of Special Needs Assistants and the appropriate school curriculum.

ASD Early intervention classes are available for children aged 3-5 with a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Early intervention classes are intended to provide early support for children with ASD before they start school.

Following early intervention children will attend a mainstream class unless there is professional guidance that they require a special class or a placement in a special school.

The NCSE, through its network of local Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs), in consultation with the relevant education partners, is responsible for the establishment of special classes in various geographical areas where there is an identified need.

There are currently 130 ASD Early Intervention, of which 18 are located in Dublin City and County, including 4 classes in the area referred to by the Deputy.

Where there is no Early Intervention placement available, my Department will consider applications under the Home Tuition Grant Scheme, where a student can receive up to 20 hours home tuition per week as an interim measure until a placement becomes available.

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.

Details of all special classes for children with special educational needs, including those in the area to which the Deputy has referred are available on www.ncse.ie in county order, and with new classes identified.

Youthreach Programme

179. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to relocate a Youthreach project in Coolock, Dublin 17 and Dublin 5; and the steps he is taking to ensure that all children throughout an area (details supplied) complete their second level education. [50225/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan): Following the sale of the former St. John of God School in Kilmore Road, Artane, the Youthreach project was temporarily moved by City of Dublin Education and Training Board (CDETb) to premises in Whitehall, while efforts were made to identify suitable alternative accommodation in the Coolock area.

Earlier this month, Youthreach staff and students moved from the Whitehall premises to a temporary facility in Finglas because of health and safety concerns.

CDETb has been actively seeking permanent premises in the Coolock area for over 18 months. It is considering a number of possible options and is examining renovation costs. It is committed to the return of the Youthreach programme to the area as soon as possible.

In the meantime, CDETb are seeking alternative temporary premises closer to the Coolock area with a view to moving staff and students as soon as possible. I have asked CDETb to keep me informed of developments.

School Enrolments Data

180. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of primary schools enrolled for the 2016-2017 academic year here; the number of secondary schools enrolled for the 2016-2017 academic year here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50261/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): In the 2016/2017 academic year there were 3,115 primary schools and 711 post-primary schools. Further information on these is available on the Department's website at the following link: <https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Statistics/Data-on-Individual-Schools/>.

Home Tuition Scheme

181. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of secondary students in receipt of home tuition as a result of being expelled from a second level school and no other school being willing to accept them as pupils; the regional breakdown of this provision; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50265/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): My Department provides grant funding under a number of Home Tuition Schemes. One of the Home Tuition schemes caters for children who are temporarily without a school place. The purpose of this No School Place (NSP) Home Tuition Scheme is to grant funding for the provision of home tuition to children for whom a school placement is being sought.

The Educational Welfare Service (EWS) of the Child and Family Agency (Tusla) is the statutory agency which can assist parents who are experiencing difficulty in securing a school place for their child. A parent applying for funding under this Home Tuition Scheme must make the application through their local Educational Welfare Officer in the EWS.

At the present time, in the current school term, funding for home tuition support has been approved for 46 post-primary students who have been permanently expelled from school. My Department does not collate these statistics by region.

School Accommodation Provision

182. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the progress made to date in providing a school (details supplied) in Galway city; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50266/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): As the Deputy may be aware, in order to plan for school provision and analyse the relevant demographic data, my Department divides the country into 314 school planning areas. My Department uses a Geographical Information System (GIS) to identify where the pressure for school places across the country will arise. The GIS uses data from a range of sources, including the Central Statistics Office, Ordnance Survey Ireland, the Department of Social Protection and my Department's own databases. With this information, my Department carries out nationwide demographic exercises at primary and post primary level to determine where additional school accommodation is needed. It is anticipated that these exercises will be concluded shortly.

A range of areas nationwide are experiencing increased demographic pressure and will be

kept under review by my Department. Galway City is one of these areas. This review takes account of updated enrolment and child benefit data and also the impact of existing and planned capacity increases to existing schools in the area. Notwithstanding that the Galway City area, including environs, is an area defined as a demographic growth area, it is also an area where certain schools are experiencing a decline in pupil numbers.

Where demographic data indicates that additional provision is required, the delivery of such additional provision is dependent on the particular circumstances of each case and may, depending on the circumstances, be provided through either one, or a combination of, the following:

- Utilising existing unused capacity within a school or schools,
- Extending the capacity of a school or schools,
- Provision of a new school or schools.

With regard to demand for particular models of school provision, it should be noted that the patronage process for new schools is a separate process. This process is run after it has been decided that a new school is required. Parental preferences are central to this process and prospective patrons are required to provide evidence of demand for their particular school model and medium of instruction. These expressions of interest are required to be from parents of primary school children eligible for enrolment in the first five years of the establishment of a proposed new post-primary school. The process is fair, transparent and open to all patrons, patron bodies and prospective patrons to apply for patronage of any planned new school under this process.

School Accommodation Provision

183. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the provision of additional school accommodation for a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50281/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I am pleased to inform the Deputy that the school in question has been approved funding under my Department's Additional Accommodation Scheme to provide 1 SET classroom. The project has been devolved to the school authority for delivery.

Broadband Service Provision

184. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will report on the broadband speeds provided to a school (details supplied); if his Department is investigating options to improve broadband provision to the school; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50282/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Through the Schools Broadband Access Programme the Department provides for the supply of internet connectivity for recognised primary and post primary schools. All post-primary schools and some special schools are now included in the 100Mbps programme.

Significant improvement has been made in recent years with the number of primary schools on broadband speeds of greater than 30mbs having increased from less than 100 in 2012 to over 1000 by the end of 2017. In Wicklow in 2012, no primary school had access to broadband speeds of 30mbs or greater, now some 30 primary schools in Wicklow have access

to broadband speeds of 30mbs or greater.

Under the current programme the Department continually reviews the availability of services and upgrades schools where the opportunity arises, in line with contractual and budgetary requirements. A recent drawdown from the Framework of Providers of Broadband Services saw some 1,100 primary schools awarded download speeds of 30Mbps or greater (the baseline download speed required under the National Broadband Plan). Some 900 of those schools have now been connected with the balance to be in place by the end of 2017.

The policy of this Department is to offer the best quality connectivity to all schools in line with the technical solutions available in the market and financial constraints. Broadband capacity can vary due to geographical location and local infrastructure, and thus impact on the service that can be provided.

The need to improve broadband connectivity to primary schools is recognised in the Digital Strategy for Schools 2015-2020, and as noted access to high speed broadband is one of the indicators identified in the Digital Strategy Action Plan. An interdepartmental working group has been established to determine how best to address broadband connectivity to primary schools in collaboration with the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment, in the context of the National Broadband Plan and the Intervention Strategy, and proposed industry provision.

In the case of the school referred to be the Deputy, the Schools Broadband Service Desk and the current Service Provider have reviewed the service provided, and they advise that the school is on the best broadband solution available at present. The school is included in the National Broadband Plan Intervention area (NBP), the Government sponsored programme to deliver high speed broadband to homes and businesses across Ireland.

School Accommodation

185. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of funding of additional accommodation for a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50283/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I wish to advise the Deputy that the school in question submitted an application to my Department for capital funding to construct a General Purpose (GP) Room.

The application was considered in the context of the very significant challenges facing my Department in prioritising available capital funding for essential mainstream classrooms to meet the demand for extra school places and in cases where additional teachers have been appointed. In the circumstances, my Department advised the school that it is not in a position to provide funding for a GP Room at this time.

Pupil Data Collection

186. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of 12 to 18 year old children, by town; the number of those children in the first year of secondary school; and the number of secondary school places per town. [50284/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The information requested by the Deputy on pupil statistics is not available broken down by town. The number of 12 to

18 year old post primary students, and the number of these students in first year, is available in the table, broken down by local authority area. The information given is from the 2016/2017 academic year, which is the latest year for which data is available.

I wish to advise the Deputy that my Department does not hold information in respect of post primary school places per town, as requested. In order to plan for school provision, my Department divides the country into 314 school planning areas and uses a Geographical Information System (GIS) to identify where the pressure for school places across the country will arise. The GIS uses data from a range of sources, including the Central Statistics Office, Ordnance Survey Ireland, the Department of Social Protection and my Department's own databases. With this information, my Department carries out nationwide demographic exercises at primary and post primary level to determine where additional school accommodation is needed.

We have doubled the number of additional school places being provided at both primary and post primary level from 8,900 additional places in 2010 to 18,000 additional school places in 2017.

	Age									
Local Authority	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	Total	Of which First Years	
Carlow County Council	331	996	966	933	910	825	481	5,442	1,019	
Cavan County Council	322	948	921	957	893	823	320	5,184	1,015	
Clare County Council	443	1,476	1,549	1,538	1,417	1,330	429	8,182	1,503	
Cork City Council	671	1,879	1,908	1,984	1,878	1,700	1,129	11,149	1,962	
Cork County Council	1,395	5,054	5,283	5,080	4,930	4,588	2,846	29,176	5,228	
Donegal County Council	851	2,346	2,294	2,368	2,233	2,009	815	12,916	2,413	
Dublin City Council	2,410	5,039	5,295	5,176	4,992	4,706	2,150	29,768	5,308	
Dun Laoghaire Rathdown	1,004	2,558	2,465	2,620	2,393	2,339	1,299	14,678	2,589	
Fingal County Council	1,562	4,142	4,084	3,940	3,514	3,002	1,261	21,505	4,226	
Galway City Council	330	961	979	895	900	683	258	5,006	976	
Galway County Council	695	2,554	2,535	2,534	2,372	2,071	963	13,724	2,594	
Kerry County Council	539	1,869	1,994	1,984	1,866	1,646	589	10,487	2,001	
Kildare County Council	1,250	3,377	3,436	3,238	3,109	2,651	1,262	18,323	3,526	
Kilkenny County Council	511	1,283	1,323	1,362	1,264	1,097	640	7,480	1,342	

Questions - Written Answers

	Age								
Laois County Council	285	953	868	810	788	660	301	4,665	948
Leitrim County Council	188	477	462	451	412	396	150	2,536	502
Limerick City Council	478	1,182	1,177	1,171	1,155	1,062	528	6,753	1,169
Limerick County Council	491	1,510	1,516	1,491	1,409	1,289	660	8,366	1,582
Longford County Council	193	680	706	738	675	562	231	3,785	692
Louth County Council	993	2,126	2,126	2,215	2,025	1,547	505	11,537	2,234
Mayo County Council	488	1,710	1,775	1,769	1,749	1,611	965	10,067	1,754
Meath County Council	903	2,702	2,709	2,670	2,495	2,018	737	14,234	2,798
Monaghan County Council	406	876	901	926	915	906	404	5,334	885
Offaly County Council	492	1,314	1,350	1,276	1,187	1,011	411	7,041	1,388
Roscommon County Council	193	581	589	619	545	498	213	3,238	615
Sligo County Council	331	849	867	870	795	724	330	4,766	846
South Dublin County Council	1,843	3,944	3,949	3,871	3,668	2,895	1,331	21,501	4,058
Tipperary (NR) County Council	373	1,157	1,135	1,176	1,287	1,067	590	6,785	1,166
Tipperary (SR) County Council	389	1,129	1,088	1,174	1,124	1,057	471	6,432	1,139
Waterford City Council	381	803	823	868	763	692	279	4,609	841
Waterford County Council	293	746	798	745	737	657	299	4,275	767
Westmeath County Council	509	1,492	1,549	1,589	1,479	1,330	532	8,480	1,540
Wexford County Council	704	2,259	2,271	2,168	1,988	1,870	905	12,165	2,360
Wicklow County Council	725	1,976	1,978	2,003	1,787	1,645	875	10,989	2,059
Total	22,972	62,948	63,669	63,209	59,654	52,967	25,159	350,578	65,045

Schools Site Acquisitions

187. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the provision of a permanent location for a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50285/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Officials in my Department have been liaising with officials in Kildare County Council in accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding in relation to the identification and acquisition of a suitable permanent site for this school and this process is ongoing at present.

A number of potential site options were assessed and one of these site options is currently being progressed.

While a site acquisition process is underway, given the commercial sensitivities associated with land acquisitions generally I am not in a position to comment further at this time.

School Accommodation Provision

188. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the provision of a school building for a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50287/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The school to which the Deputy refers was approved funding under my Departments Prefab Replacement Initiative to replace temporary structures with permanent accommodation. The project has been devolved for delivery to the school authority. The school recently applied to my Department for additional funding for an increased scope of works. This application is currently being assessed and the school authority will be notified of the outcome of its request as soon as possible.

Teacher Data

189. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his attention has been drawn to the absence of sufficient substitute teachers in the west Waterford area at both primary and secondary level; the measures his Department plans to deal with the matter; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50323/17]

190. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his attention has been drawn to shortages of suitably qualified substitute second level teachers for French, English and maths in the Dun Laoghaire Rathdown area; the measures his Department plans to deal with the matter; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50324/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 189 and 190 together.

I am pleased to have been in a position to significantly expand the recruitment of teachers at primary and post primary levels. Some 2,300 new teachers were recruited in 2016-2017 and 2,900 are being recruited in 2017-2018. The figure of 2,900 is 21% more than the number announced in budget 2017, so we have in fact been able to recruit more new teachers than we have announced. All of the 2016-2017 posts have been successfully filled and the process for filling the additional posts in the current year is almost complete. We are successfully filling the posts

that we are making available.

However, I am aware that some schools have reported difficulties in recruiting substitute teachers at primary level and in certain subjects at post primary level, and I am committed to examining all possible means of addressing these issues.

Regarding issues around finding substitution at primary level, there are strong career opportunities in teaching and the number of permanent full-time positions are currently increasing at over 1,000 per year in 2016/2017 and 2017/2018. Due to the additional permanent positions being created, young teachers have greater opportunities to take on permanent positions, and as a result some schools may be experiencing issues in hiring teachers to fill temporary or substitute roles, which arise in schools for a number of reasons, including covering sick leave and career breaks.

At post primary level I have taken certain initiatives to address some of the supply pressures in particular subject areas. These include, as part of the implementation of the Policy on Gaeltacht Education, increasing from 2018/19 the number of places available on the existing Irish medium post primary initial teacher education programme in NUIG, to which I have granted two additional posts from September 2017. This measure will strengthen the Irish-language proficiency of newly qualified teachers across a range of subjects and, it is anticipated, also increase the supply of Irish language teachers. I have also increased from 85 to 101 the number of students admitted to St Angela's, Sligo to follow the Home Economics ITE programme in the current year, with further expansions in future years being considered.

I have also undertaken measures to increase the pool of teachers available to schools in particular to fill short term vacancies. My Department informed all teachers retiring in 2017 that in order to remain eligible for employment in a state funded teaching post for a period of more than five consecutive days or to supervise the State examinations, a teacher must maintain his/her registration with the Teaching Council. My Department also increased the limits for employment while on career break at primary level to a maximum of 90 days in a school year. In addition, as a longer term measure, under my Department's Gaeltacht Policy, an RFT is currently being developed for a new Irish-medium B.Ed. (primary teaching) ITE programme.

The Deputy will be aware of the report of the Technical Working Group on teacher supply, 'Striking the Balance' which, while focussing on the development of a model of primary teacher supply, outlined the work which will be required to establish a long term model of post-primary teacher supply. The Deputy will appreciate that there are difficulties in developing a reliable model of teacher supply, particularly at second level, and this was recognised in the work of the Teaching Council as teaching is competing with many other sectors for graduates in areas like Maths, Science, and Irish. The Teaching Council, which has an advisory role in this matter, recently convened a consultative forum on teacher supply with relevant stakeholders with the aim of producing teacher supply proposals and I look forward to seeing the report from this forum which will further inform our thinking in this matter.

I am currently reviewing with my Department other potential initiatives on teacher supply. In that context my Department has engaged with the HEA with a view to obtaining baseline data to support future policy decisions in this area. My Department also intends engaging with other stakeholders, including school management bodies, in this matter.

School Staff

191. Deputy Michael Moynihan asked the Minister for Education and Skills if the staffing

appeal submitted by a school (details supplied) in County Cork will be reviewed; his views on whether the appeal criteria do not take enough consideration of the issues facing small schools and multigrade classes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50357/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The criteria used for the allocation of teaching posts is published annually on the Department website. The key factor for determining the level of staffing resources provided at individual school level is the staffing schedule for the relevant school year and pupil enrolments on the previous 30 September.

The staffing schedule operates in a clear and transparent manner and treats all similar types of schools equally irrespective of location.

The Staffing Schedule includes the provision where schools experiencing rapid increases in enrolment can apply for additional permanent mainstream posts on developing grounds. The staffing schedule also includes an appeals mechanism for schools to submit an appeal under certain criteria to an independent Appeals Board. This process includes a provision in which schools that are not gaining an additional teaching post under the developing schools criterion can submit an appeal to the independent Appeals Board. This appeal criterion is targeted at those schools that make a significant contribution to the provision of school places and so assist the response to demographic growth within their area.

The school referred to by the Deputy submitted an application for consideration by the Appeals Board at its October meeting under the criteria of alleviating some of the pressure on class sizes at infants level. The appeal was refused by the Appeals Board on the basis that the grounds of the appeal did not warrant the allocation of an additional post for the 2017/18 school year. The school has been notified of the outcome of the appeal.

The Appeals Board operates independently of the Department and its decision is final.

Budget 2018 provides for an additional 1280 teaching posts in the 2018/19 school year. This includes a one point improvement in the staffing schedule in primary schools which brings the position to the most favourable ever seen at primary level.

These changes will come into effect in September 2018 for the 2018/19 school year.

The detailed staffing arrangements including appeal process for 2018/19 will be set out in the staffing schedule Circular for the 2018/19 school year. The circular will be published early in 2018.

DEIS Data

192. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of teaching principals in DEIS schools by local authority area; the cost of providing an administrative principal in these schools; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50388/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The number of teaching principals in DEIS Urban Band 1 and DEIS Urban Band 2 schools nationally is 36. A breakdown of this figure is compiled on a by county basis.

The average salary per teaching post at primary level is €58,800.

I wish to advise the Deputy that the current School Support Programme provides for the appointment of an Administrative Principal on an enrolment of 116 pupils (81 pupils if operating a specialist autism unit) in DEIS Urban Band 1 schools and 144 pupils (114 pupils if operating

a specialist autism unit) in a DEIS Urban Band 2 schools as opposed to an enrolment of 177 pupils in other mainstream schools.

The full list of supports and resources available to DEIS schools is available on my Department's website at the following link <https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/DEIS-Delivering-Equality-of-Opportunity-in-Schools-/DEIS-Supporting-Information/Supports-to-DEIS-Schools.html>

County:	Schools with Teaching Principals - DEIS Band 1	Schools with Teaching Principals - DEIS Band 2
Cork	0	1
Donegal	3	0
Dublin	9	2
Galway	0	1
Kerry	0	3
Kildare	2	0
Laois	2	0
Limerick	4	0
Mayo	1	1
Monaghan	0	1
Roscommon	0	1
Sligo	1	0
Tipperary	0	2
Waterford	0	1
Westmeath	1	0
Total:	23	13

Departmental Contracts Data

193. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the public contracts between his Department and companies (details supplied) in each of the years 2011 to 2016; the value of each contract [50399/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Department has awarded six contracts in the period 2011 to 2016 of which five were to Deloitte and a single contract to Ernst and Young. The contract values and purpose of each contract are set out in the table;

Company	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Purpose of contract
Ernst and Young	-	-	-	-	131,462.40	-	Development of the business case for the ETB Finance Shared Service Project.
Deloitte	-	-	-	93,172.50	-	-	Baseline business case preparation for the ETB Payroll Shared Services in 2014

Company	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Purpose of contract
Deloitte	-	-	-	-	264,434.82	-	Expert knowledge, implementation, advice and support for the ETB Payroll Shared Service project.
Deloitte	-	-	-	-	-	18,450.00	Data Loss Prevention Audit Fee
Deloitte	-	-	-	69,701.84	-	-	Audit Service as part of Erasmus+ Programme
Deloitte	-	-	-	-	-	66,892.52	Audit Service as part of Erasmus+ Programme

School Textbooks Code of Practice

194. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Question Nos. 152 and 153 of 14 November 2017, the rationale for his inaction in view of the fact that an organisation (details supplied) and the CEO of a company have expressed concern regarding the matter and have asked that it be addressed; and his plans to take action regrading same. [50424/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Adherence to appropriate copyright requirements is the responsibility of individual school management. The Department advises schools of their responsibilities in this regards and supports schools in developing policies to address such issues. The Department provides access to educational resources online via the Scoilnet portal, to ensure a wide range of relevant teaching resources are freely accessible for schools and teachers. No copyright issue arise in relation to such access.

No contact has been made with the Department by the entities referred to by the Deputy.

Schools Site Acquisitions

195. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding construction of a new Educate Together national school in Wexford town; if his Department has visited sites for possible construction of said school; if his Department has completed assessments of such sites; when his Department plans to make a selection of a site for the new school; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50429/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): As the Deputy is aware, the project to which he refers was announced as part of my Department's Six Year Capital Programme in 2015.

Officials in my Department are working closely with officials from Wexford County Council under the Memorandum of Understanding in relation to the acquisition of a suitable permanent location for Wexford Educate Together NS.

Preliminary technical assessments of identified site options have been completed and sub-

sequent to the evaluation of these by Department and Local Authority officials a shortlist of preferred site options was selected. These shortlisted sites have been subject to a more comprehensive technical assessment and engagement with the relevant landowners has commenced. The selection of a preferred site option will be predicated on the outcome of these discussions with the landowners, and the school patron will be informed when the site acquisition process has been completed.

Schools Building Projects

196. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he has satisfied himself the interests of the State are being protected in relation to the defective works carried out at a building project (details supplied). [50435/17]

197. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when he expects outstanding matters to be resolved in connection with the completion of a project (details supplied). [50436/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 196 and 197 together.

The two schools referred to by the Deputy were devolved to the National Development Agency (NDA) for delivery. The NDA are waiting written confirmation from the contractor with specific details of the next steps and timelines to full resolution of the roofing issues.

I understand from the NDA that the contractor remains committed to resolving the matter fully and is continuing to carry out preventative and reactive maintenance on the roof in the interim. Pending the resolution of the outstanding issues full retention monies are being held by the NDA.

Youthreach Programme

198. **Deputy Denise Mitchell** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason for the relocation of the Youthreach programme formerly located in Whitehall, Artane, Dublin, to the Finglas area; if this is a permanent move; and his plans for ensuring the location of a Youthreach programme in the Coolock and Artane areas. [50459/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan): Following the sale of the former St. John of God School in Kilmore Road, Artane, the Youthreach project was temporarily moved by City of Dublin Education and Training Board (CDET) to premises in Whitehall, while efforts were made to identify suitable alternative accommodation in the Coolock area.

Earlier this month, Youthreach staff and students moved from the Whitehall premises to a temporary facility in Finglas because of health and safety concerns.

CDET has been actively seeking permanent premises in the Coolock area for over 18 months. It is considering a number of possible options and is examining renovation costs. It is committed to the return of the Youthreach programme to the area as soon as possible.

In the meantime, CDET are seeking alternative temporary premises closer to the Coolock area with a view to moving staff and students as soon as possible. I have asked CDET to keep me informed of developments.

Third Level Fees

199. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if an Irish resident who has been working as a physiotherapist abroad for more than five years is required to pay non-EU fees to study medicine on his or her return. [50481/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The position is that to qualify for funding towards tuition fees, students must be first-time undergraduates, hold *inter alia* EU/EEA/Swiss nationality in their own right, and have been ordinarily resident in an EU/EEA/Swiss state for at least three of the five years preceding their entry to an approved third level course. These rules apply to all students from all EU/EEA/Swiss states. Students undertaking a second undergraduate qualification are not entitled to support under the scheme.

Where students do not qualify for free fees funding they must pay the appropriate fee - either EU or Non-EU, as determined by each higher education institution. These institutions are autonomous bodies and the level of fee payable by students who do not meet the requirements of the free fees scheme is a matter for the relevant institution to determine.

Tax relief is available on fees paid and students can apply to the Student Assistance Fund for financial support if needed.

Summer Works Scheme Administration

200. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a school (details supplied) can use funding under the summer works scheme for repairs to his roof. [50483/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I wish to advise the Deputy that my Department has been engaging with the school's patron relating to the matter in question. My Department has indicated to the patron that the request was approved in principle subject to the patron providing full information relating to the proposal. This information is awaited and will be considered further when received.

School Enrolments

201. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will examine the case of a person (details supplied) who has not been able to secure a place in a second level school for the past two years. [50484/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The enrolment of a child to a school is a matter in the first instance for the parents of the child and the Board of Management of a school.

Where a parent seeks to enrol their child in a school and that school refuses to enrol a pupil, the school is obliged to inform parents of their right under Section 29 of the Education Act 1998 to appeal that decision to the Secretary General of my Department. Only where an appeal under Section 29 is upheld, may the Secretary General of my Department direct a school to enrol a pupil.

Children may be eligible for home tuition where a determination is awaited in respect of an expulsion or refusal to enrol is taken under section 29 of the Education Act, 1998.

An application for home tuition for the child referred to by the Deputy was received in my Department in recent days. The Education Welfare Service has advised my Department that the local Education Welfare Officer (EWO) is providing assistance to the family.

The NCSE is responsible, through its network of local Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENO), for allocating resources to schools to support students with special educational needs. The NCSE operates within the Department's criteria in allocating such support.

The parents of the child referred to by the Deputy are also encouraged to continue to liaise with their local Special Educational Needs Organiser (SENO) for advice on supports and further assistance. Contact details are available on *www.ncse.ie*.

Minor Works Scheme

202. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the date by which the minor works grant will be made available to primary schools; if this grant will be a guaranteed yearly payment in order to assist schools to adequately budget for the year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50488/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The normal practice is for the Minor Works Grant to be announced towards the end of the year if funding permits. Over the next number of weeks the issue of the Minor Works Grant 2017/2018 will be considered in the context of my Department's overall capital position.

Circular Letter 0062/2013 which provides guidance in respect of the Minor Works Grant states that "the grant will only be paid in future years as funding permits". In that context it is vital that schools take this stipulation into account before commencing any infrastructure related works.

Institutes of Technology

203. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Question No. 187 of 21 November 2017, the date for the publication of the GMIT working group's final report; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50494/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The report of the GMIT working group has now been submitted to my Department. I will consider the findings and recommendations in the report, in conjunction with officials in my Department. The report will be published before the end of 2017.

Student Grant Scheme

204. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will address a matter (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50498/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): As part of a comprehensive customer service and communications strategy provided by Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI), to ensure that all necessary avenues are open to applicants to receive the information they need, a dedicated email and phone line service is provided by SUSI for Oireachtas members.

This was established to meet an identified need for applicants who choose to engage the assistance of their public representatives in making enquiries about their grant applications. This service complements the established channels provided by SUSI which include online application tracking, a dedicated website, a telephone helpdesk, email and social media, including Facebook and Twitter. Enquiries may be emailed direct to SUSI at oireachtas@susi.ie. Staff in SUSI are responding to email queries within a matter of days.

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 within the required statutory timeframe.

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, again, within the required timeframe.

Student Grant Scheme Eligibility

205. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the consideration he has given to amendment of the student support scheme to resolve issues which continue to arise (details supplied) in relation to grant eligibility; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50506/17]

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.

Student Grant Scheme Administration

206. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will consider returning to the pre 2010 non adjacent distance rate with regard to SUSI grants; and if

he will make a statement on the matter. [50511/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The student maintenance grant is a contribution towards the living costs of a student. It is not intended to cover the full costs of attending college. The student grant scheme does however, provide for different levels of maintenance support, depending on means. Grants are also provided at adjacent and non-adjacent rates. The higher non-adjacent rates are intended to provide additional support to those students who may be living away from home.

Budget 2011 provided for a number of student grant measures which came into effect for the 2011/12 academic year, including the change in the assessment of the qualifying distance criterion for the non-adjacent rate of grant from 24 kilometres to 45 kilometres.

The 24km distance criterion was originally set in 1968 and had not been updated in more than 40 years. Since then, significant improvements have taken place in the road and rail network and it is considered that the revised distance criteria is more consistent with the type of distances that students may legitimately be expected to commute to college.

The current qualifying distance of 45km for the higher non-adjacent rate of student grant takes into account a reasonable radius within which students may commute on a daily basis. There were no proposals to amend the distance criterion in Budget 2018.

Students in third-level institutions experiencing exceptional financial need can apply for support under the Student Assistance Fund. This Fund assists students, in a sensitive and compassionate manner, who might otherwise be unable to continue their third level studies due to their financial circumstances. Information on the fund is available through the Access Officer in the third level institution attended. This fund is administered on a confidential, discretionary basis.

Special Educational Needs Service Provision

207. **Deputy Seán Crowe** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason a decision was made to remove the special needs assistant support for a person (details supplied); if this decision will be reviewed; and if this decision will be reversed. [50569/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The National Council for Special Education (NCSE), which is an independent statutory agency, is responsible, through its network of local Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs) for allocating a quantum of Special Needs Assistant (SNA) support for each school annually taking into account the assessed care needs of children qualifying for SNA support enrolled in the school. The NCSE operates within my Department's criteria in allocating such support, as set out in Circular 0030/2014.

In considering applications for SNA supports for individual students, the SENOs take account of the student's needs and considers the resources available to the school to identify whether additionality is needed or whether the school might reasonably be expected to meet the needs of the students from its current level of resources. SNAs are not allocated to individual students but to schools as a school based resource.

Details of SNA allocations which have been made to schools for the 2017/18 school year have been published by the NCSE on their website at <http://ncse.ie/statistics>.

Where a school has received its allocation of SNA support for 2017/18, but wishes new

enrolments or new assessments to be considered, which were not taken into account when the initial allocation was made, they may continue to make applications to the NCSE.

The NCSE Appeals Process may be invoked in the following instances:

- a parent or a school where it is considered that a child was not granted access to SNA support on the grounds that Department policy was not met in accordance with Circular 0030/2014.

- a school may also appeal a decision, where the school considers that the NCSE, in applying Department policy, has not allocated the appropriate level of SNA supports to the school to meet the special educational and/or care needs of the child(ren) concerned.

All schools have the contact details of their local SENO and parents may also contact their local SENO directly to discuss their child's special educational needs, using the contact details available at <http://ncse.ie/seno-contact-list>.

The NCSE has advised that the school should submit a new application for SNA support for the student referred to by the Deputy, as additional information in support of the application, which was not available at the time of the annual allocation process, has now become available. My officials have asked the NCSE to liaise with the School to ensure that the additional information is considered.

Schools Building Projects Status

208. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the development of a school (details supplied); if all conveyancing issues that have been ongoing since June 2016 have been rectified; if his Department has met Galway County Council; if the design team for this project has met Galway County Council; if outstanding issues have been addressed, for example, the footpath and connectivity with the town; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50601/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The current position regarding the school in question is that the planning application is in progress and is expected to be ready to lodge late December or early January. Representatives of the school attended a meeting with Department Officials last week to bring them up to date on the project and to review the plans prior to lodging. Department Officials and the Design Team for the project have met with the Planning Authority and all matters arising in relation to the design and infrastructure are being addressed through the Planning process.

In tandem with this the conveyancing process in respect of this acquisition is at an advanced stage. The finalisation of the acquisition has been delayed to date as some technical issues raised as part of the conveyancing process needed to be clarified. These issues have been resolved for the most part and the Department expects to be in a position to finalise the contracts shortly.

Schools Building Projects Status

209. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding the development of a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50602/17]

210. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the

development of a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50603/17]

211. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the development of a project (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50604/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 209 to 211, inclusive, together.

I wish to advise the Deputy that major projects for the two schools referred to are included in my Department's 6 year Construction Programme.

My Department's proposal is to co-locate the two schools in question on the current Gairmscoil Mhuire site once that site is vacated. In this regard, I wish to advise the Deputy that a major project for Gairmscoil Mhuire is progressing through the architectural planning process.

My Department has received an application from Galway and Roscommon ETB regarding funding for the upgrading of the sub-office located in Roscommon town. My Department has had ongoing engagement with personnel in the ETB in relation to this matter. There are many competing demands for capital investment within the education sector and this application is being considered within that context. My Department will be in touch with the ETB in relation to same.

Education and Training Provision

212. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the development of a further education training centre in Mervue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50605/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan): Galway Roscommon Education & Training Board have confirmed that their training centre in Mervue, Galway, is currently developing an extra workshop for electrical apprentices. This is in response to the growing demand nationally for electrical apprentices.

Following a procurement process, it is envisaged that this work will begin in the next two weeks and should be completed in early 2018. This additional workshop will increase the Centre's capacity to run 4 classes per year and will alleviate the need for local electrical apprentices to travel outside of Galway to attend their off the job phases.

Education and Training Boards Staff

213. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of ETB's that have a public base of over 500, 750, 1000 and 1200, respectively; the number of ancillary staff designated to each school, by county, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50606/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): My Department provides each Education and Training Board with an Administrative and Maintenance staffing allocation. When allocating non-teaching (i.e. ancillary) posts in ETB schools, in recent years my Department adopted the following approach as a means of providing a minimum level of staffing for schools during the public service moratorium.

- Schools with enrolments in excess of 250 pupils have an entitlement to 1 Whole Time Equivalent (WTE) School Secretary at Grade III level and 1 WTE Caretaker

- Cleaning Hours are allocated on the basis of 4.5 hours per pupil per annum (p.a.) up to a maximum annual cleaning allocation of 1 Cleaner or 2028 hours and a minimum annual cleaning allocation of 0.25 of a cleaner post or 520 hours. p.a.

- Schools with enrolments below 250 pupils would have an minimum entitlement to 0.5 WTE School Secretary at Grade III level and 0.5 WTE Caretaker

In many schools staffing levels are higher than the above entitlements as staff numbers did not reduce down to the minimum levels during the moratorium.

Based on the latest staffing returns received from the individual ETBs, there are 907.82 WTE non-teaching (i.e. ancillary) staff employed in schools across the ETB Sector as outlined in the tables. The way staffing is allocated to individual ETB schools and colleges and other activities within the ETB scheme is a matter for each ETB, accordingly it is not possible to provide a break-down between individual schools or on a county basis.

If the Deputy requires the information on a school by school or county basis, the relevant ETB will be able to supply the information.

Non-Teaching Maintenance Staffing in ETB Schools

	CD ETB	DDL ETB	Cork	LC ETB	WW ETB	GR ETB	LM ETB	KW ETB	CM ETB	Done- gal	Kerry	KC ETB	LO- ETB	LW ETB	MS- LETB	Tip- perary	Total
Grade	WTE	WTE	WTE	WTE	WTE	WTE	WTE	WTE	WTE	WTE	WTE	WTE	WTE	WTE	WTE	WTE	WTE
Assistant Caretaker	0.00	5.81	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	5.81
Assistant Porter	18.84	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	18.84
Caretaker	0.00	30.00	36.70	19.62	12.22	22.73	19.30	20.50	15.50	13.78	8.18	13.50	7.00	7.00	19.80	12.61	258.44
Cleaner	0.00	35.42	39.03	12.59	10.49	9.46	13.08	16.45	14.03	9.49	4.86	11.78	2.00	5.60	6.32	5.64	196.24
General Operative	70.35	2.90	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.36	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	73.61
Head Porter	2.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.00
Maintenance Person	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.00	0.00	0.00	2.00
Porter	9.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	11.00
Senior Caretaker	0.00	4.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	4.00
Senior Porter	9.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	9.00
Total	109.19	78.13	75.73	32.21	24.71	32.19	32.38	36.95	29.53	23.27	13.04	25.64	9.00	14.60	26.12	18.25	580.94

School Accommodation

214. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the cost of pre-fabricated buildings in each of the years 2011 to 2016 and to date in 2017 for a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50607/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The table outlines the amount issued by the Department on prefabricated buildings in respect of the school referred to by the Deputy in each of the years 2011 to 24th November 2017.

My Department's proposal under the six year Construction Programme is to locate the school in question on the current Gairmscoil Mhuire site once that site is vacated.

Questions - Written Answers

School	Roll No	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
GAEL-SCOIL RIADA	20237T	78,338	84,950	154,710	66,796	130,927	232,541	127,329

School Accommodation

215. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the amount pre-fabricated buildings have cost on hire in each of the years 2011 to 2016 and to date in 2017 for a school (details supplied). [50608/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The table outlines the amount issued by the Department on hiring prefabricated buildings in respect of the school referred to by the Deputy in each of the years 2011 to 24th November 2017.

My Department's proposal under the six year Construction Programme is to provide a new 1,000 pupil school.

School	Roll No	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
GAIRM-SCOIL MHUIRE, ATHENRY	71270G	€0	€0	€0	€180,526	€21,448	€21,746	€21,746

School Accommodation

216. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the cost of hiring pre fabricated buildings in each of the years 2011 to 2016 and to date in 2017 for a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50609/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The table outlines the amount issued by the Department on hiring prefabricated buildings in respect of the school referred to by the Deputy in each of the years 2011 to 24th November 2017.

My Department's proposal under the six year Construction Programme is to locate the school in question on the current Gairmscoil Mhuire site once that site is vacated.

School	Roll No	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
COLAISTE AN EACH-REIDH	76102K	€0	€0	€0	254,861	33,015	48,487	48,487

Ministerial Meetings

217. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when he last met the chief executive officer of SOLAS; if he will report on the issues discussed; when he will meet him next; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50626/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The last formal meeting I held with the Chief Executive Officer of SOLAS was on 5 April 2017. This meeting was scheduled to discuss the draft SOLAS Corporate Plan 2017 - 2019.

I also meet the CEO of SOLAS at certain launches, announcements or visits to Further Education and Training settings. I last met the CEO at a visit to the Dublin Dun Laoghaire Education and Training Board training centre in Baldoyle in the context of the European Vocational

Skills Week 2017.

Regular meetings take place between officials from my department and SOLAS under the Performance Delivery Agreement between SOLAS and my Department.

I have no upcoming meetings scheduled at this time with the CEO of SOLAS.

Physical Education

218. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his attention has been drawn to concerns raised on behalf of an association (details supplied); the way in which he plans to address these concerns; if his attention has been further drawn to the fact that only 12% of young persons are meeting the guideline of 60 minutes of physical activity per day; his plans to address concerns on the optional nature of physical education at senior cycle for those not taking physical education for their leaving certificate; the timeframe for the implementation of leaving certificate physical education; the CPD facility development plans and teaching time allocation for leaving certificate physical education; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50673/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The specification for a new examinable Leaving Certificate Physical Education subject (the specification) and a new non-examinable Framework for Senior Cycle Physical Education (the Framework) were approved by me in February 2017, following development by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA).

Implementation of Leaving Certificate PE as a subject has recently been re-emphasised as a Government priority, having been included in last year's Programme for a Partnership Government. The priority is to introduce, on a phased basis, the subject in a group of schools from September 2018. These developments are in keeping with the strong emphasis from my Department on promoting and encouraging Healthy Lifestyles for all students and commitments in the Programme for Partnership Government and the National Physical Activity Plan, reflecting the concern to ensure that all young persons in our schools engage in some form of physical activity.

In terms of identifying the schools to participate in Phase 1 of the implementation of Leaving Certificate Physical Education, it is proposed that an open call to all post-primary schools will be issued by the NCCA in December and a selection panel will then choose the schools to participate in Phase 1. Schools will be given the option to decide if they wish to implement the specification, the Framework or both. Schools will be provided with information in the December call in order to allow them make an informed decision. It is proposed from September 2020 that Leaving Certificate PE will be optional in all schools.

The Department and its agencies will continue with the development and implementation of a programme of CPD, supporting teachers in Phase 1 schools to ensure that they are in a position to implement the specification and the Framework from September 2018.

The timetabling of Leaving Certificate Physical Education (LCPE) and Senior Cycle Physical Education (SCPE) will be a matter for the school to decide. LCPE is designed to be taught in a minimum of 180 hours in total over the two years of fifth and sixth year. The SCPE Framework is designed to be taught over the two or three years of senior cycle education. It is recommended that a double period per week (approximately 80 minutes) is made available as the minimum requirement for teaching Senior Cycle Physical Education.

Foireann Roinne

219. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Oideachais agus Scileanna cén líon iomlán foirne atá fostaithe ina Roinn faoi láthair; cé mhéid post atá daingnithe nó aitheanta ag an Roinn (i scéim teanga, nó ar aon bhealach eile) mar phoist a bhfuil riachtanas Gaeilge ag baint leo; cé mhéid duine atá ann ag a bhfuil líofacht i nGaeilge agus atá ag feidhmiú sna poist sin atá daingnithe nó aitheanta mar phoist a bhfuil riachtanas Gaeilge ag baint leo; an bhfuil sé beartaithe ag an tráth seo aon phost eile de chuid na Roinne a aithint mar phoist a bhfuil riachtanas Gaeilge. [50680/17]

220. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Oideachais agus Scileanna cé mhéid folúntas a líonadh ina Roinn ó thús na bliana seo; cé mhéid de na folúntais sin a bhain le poist a bhí sainaitheanta mar phoist a raibh Gaeilge riachtanach ina leith; cé mhéid folúntas atá le líonadh faoi láthair agus cé mhéid de na folúntais siúd atá sainaitheanta mar fholúntais a bhfuil riachtanas Gaeilge ag baint leo. [50697/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 219 and 220 together.

Is iad seo a leanas na ceapacháin agus ardú céimeanna sa Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna go dtí seo i 2017:

Ardú Céimeanna

Grád	Uimhir
Príomh Cigire Cúnta	1
Roinn Cigire	4
Ard Síceolaí Oideachais	1
Rúnaí Cúnta	2
Príomh Oifigeach	2
Leas Príomh Oifigeach	7
Ard Oifigeach Feidhmiúcháin	19
Oifigeach Riaracháin	2

Ceapacháin

Grád	Uimhir
Leas Príomh Cigire	1
Cigire Luachblianta	4
Roinnchigire Bunscoile	4
Cigire Iar- bhunscoile	1
Síceolaí Oideachais	27
Staitisteoir	1
Innealtóir Grád 1	1
Ailtire	1
Priomhoifigeach	2
Priomhoifigeach Cúnta	0
Ard Oifigeach Feidhmiúcháin	4
Oifigeach Riaracháin	4

Grád	Uimhir
Oifigeach Feidhmiúcháin	12
Oifigeach Cléireachais	41
Glantóir	2

Faoi láthair tá 1,300 nó mar sin duine fostaithe inson Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna.

Is iad na príomhghráid sa Roinn atá gafa le seirbhísí a sheachadadh ar phobal na Gaeilge ná na gráid a bhaineann le cigireacht na scoileanna agus le soláthar na seirbhísí síceolaíochta oideachais a chuireann An tSeirbhís Náisiúnta Síceolaíochta Oideachais ar fáil do scoileanna i gceantair Ghaeltachta agus do Ghaelscoileanna. Tá 24 síceolaí oideachais sa tSeirbhís faoi láthair atá inniúil sa Ghaeilge agus a chuireann a gcuid seirbhísí profisiúnta ar fáil trí Ghaeilge. Tá 51 cigire i Rannán Chigireacht na Scoileanna ag an mbunleibhéal agus tá 48 díobh seo freagrach as scoileanna ina múintear an siollabas trí Ghaeilge. Tá 11 de na cigirí seo freagrach as scoileanna Gaeltachta mar go bhfuil na scoileanna sin mar chuid den cheantar acu. Ag an mbunleibhéal is speisialtóirí in ábhar-réimsí na cigirí den chuid is mó. Cuireann foireann na cigireachta iar-bhunleibhéal a cuid seirbhísí ar fáil chomh maith do scoileanna ina múintear an curaclam trí Ghaeilge. Faoi láthair tá dóthain de bhaill foirne profisiúnta ann atá inniúil sa Ghaeilge chun seirbhísí profisiúnta a sheachadadh do na scoileanna i gceist.

I mí Éanair 2017 bunaigh mo Roinn Aonad nua An tAonad um Oideachas Gaeltachta. Tá ceathrar ag obair ann is tá siad go léir líofa í nGaeilge. I dteannta sin tá líon oifigigh riaracháin atá ábalta plé le fiosrúcháin trí mhéan na Gaeilge”.

Brexit Negotiations

221. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will report on the discussion on human rights in the context of the Brexit negotiations. [50667/17]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Government is determined to ensure that the Good Friday Agreement in all its parts is fully protected and respected in the context of the UK’s withdrawal from the EU, including all elements relating to human rights. Human rights protections form a vital part of the institutional underpinning for the peace settlement founded on the Good Friday Agreement and serve to build and maintain confidence for communities across Northern Ireland. The protection of human rights in Northern Ireland - including through the incorporation into law of the European Convention on Human Rights - is one of the key principles of the Agreement, as set out in the chapter on Rights, Safeguards and Equality of Opportunity. It is important to be clear that the European Convention on Human Rights is separate and distinct to the European Union. The UK’s decision to leave the EU has no impact on its obligations under the European Convention on Human Rights. Even after the UK leaves the EU, there remains a continuing obligation on the British Government to incorporate the European Convention on Human Rights into Northern Ireland law, as provided for in the Good Friday Agreement. In this regard, it is welcome that the UK Government’s White Paper on legislating for withdrawal from the EU that was published in March clarified that it has no plans to leave the European Convention on Human Rights.

In February, as part of the All-Island Civic Dialogue on Brexit, the Government convened a Sectoral Dialogue on Human Rights under the Good Friday Agreement to hear the views of civil society, North and South, on the possible implications of Brexit for this pivotal chapter of the Agreement. This was a very valuable exchange and a number of key themes emerged, which

have been communicated publicly, which are informing the Government's approach in this area, including as set out in the comprehensive document, *Ireland and the negotiations on the UK's withdrawal from the European Union under Article 50 of the Treaty on European Union*, published by the Government on 2 May.

The Government's programme of engagement with EU partners has ensured that Ireland's unique issues and concerns have been fully understood by the EU27 and have been reflected in the EU's negotiating position for the Article 50 negotiations with the UK. In this regard, the Guiding Principles for the dialogue on Ireland/Northern Ireland, which were published by the European Commission Article 50 Task Force in September, confirm that European Union law and practice has provided a supporting framework in Northern Ireland and across the island for the Good Friday Agreement provisions on Rights, Safeguards and Equality of Opportunity. They state that the Good Friday Agreement requires equivalent standards of protection of rights in Ireland and Northern Ireland and that the United Kingdom should ensure that no diminution of rights is caused by the United Kingdom's departure from the European Union, including in the area of protection against forms of discrimination currently enshrined in Union law. This position has been conveyed by the European Commission Task Force to the UK in the Article 50 negotiations in the High Level Dialogue on Ireland and Northern Ireland.

As co-guarantor of the Good Friday Agreement, the Government takes very seriously our responsibility to safeguard its institutions and principles, including in the area of human rights. The Government will continue to pursue, with our EU partners, an outcome to the Article 50 process that protects our headline priorities and Ireland's fundamental interests, including to ensure protection of and respect for the Good Friday Agreement in all its parts.

Brexit Issues

222. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade to set out the 142 areas of North-South co-operation that his Department is working on in the context of Brexit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49866/17]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): North South cooperation brings very tangible benefits to the daily lives of people and, in particular, to those living in the border regions where it contributes to improving economic opportunity and development. It is also a very practical outworking of the peace process which allows for the normalisation of relationships between people across the island, to our mutual benefit. North South cooperation between Ireland and Northern Ireland is one of the central elements of the Good Friday Agreement. The EU Taskforce's Guiding Principles for the Dialogue on Ireland/Northern Ireland indicated that it is "necessary for the European Union and the United Kingdom to examine whether, and if so how, the fact that European Union law ceases to apply in the United Kingdom after withdrawal might impact on continued cooperation and whether specific provisions need to be inserted in the Withdrawal Agreement". Officials have been carrying out detailed work over the last few weeks to map out areas of cooperation that operate on a North South basis on the island of Ireland and which rely on EU law and policies. Over the course of this exercise, an extensive range of North South cooperation was identified, covering areas under the formal North South Ministerial Council work programmes and other areas of cooperation that have developed since the Peace Process.

There is still more work to be done in this area, but the exercise has underlined the need to avoid risks presented by any regulatory divergence from the rules of the EU Single Market and Customs Union. North South cooperation has made an important contribution through the provisions of the Good Friday Agreement to the improvement of people's lives on this island.

We want to ensure that this cooperation can continue in a meaningful way.

The UK has a responsibility to ensure that it does not hinder or impede the continuation and development of North South cooperation by its withdrawal from the EU. Avoiding a hard border is only one element of this.

Appointments to State Boards Data

223. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade to set out in tabular form the number of vacancies in each state board under the aegis of his Department. [49937/17]

225. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade to set out in tabular form the names of persons he has appointed to each state board under the aegis of his Department that have not come from the Public Appointments Service list of suitable candidates. [49999/17]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): I propose to take Questions Nos. 223 and 225 together.

There are no State Boards under the aegis of my Department.

Foreign Conflicts

224. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will liaise with the Turkish Embassy in Dublin and with the Turkish Government in Ankara with a view to using all possible diplomatic means to help the return of 54 missing children (details supplied) and the return of the bodies of those missing children that may have died; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49949/17]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The attack on a convoy of busses transporting evacuees from the besieged towns of Foua and Kefraya in North West Syria last April, which left over 100 people dead, many of them children, was utterly abhorrent and I, once again, condemn it unreservedly. Attacks on civilians in Syria, such as the bombing of this convoy of evacuees, further underline the need for full accountability for these appalling acts. Those responsible for such crimes must be held accountable. In relation to the allegation of kidnapping raised by the Deputy, it is extremely difficult to get reliable and verified information on the situation and reliable evidence is essential for follow up and accountability. I am not aware of any indication that the 54 children who are still missing are being held in Turkey, and I would be happy to pursue the matter further, if the Deputy will furnish more detail. Conflict and war have a particularly horrific impact on vulnerable groups such as children, and Ireland is committed to working to ensure that their needs are taken into account in humanitarian response in a meaningful way. Ireland will continue to prioritise the protection of civilians, and particularly the most vulnerable of these, including children, in our response to the Syria crisis.

In the meantime, I call on anyone who may have any knowledge about the whereabouts of the missing children, however insignificant it may seem, to make that information known in order to alleviate the suffering of children separated from their families.

Question No. 225 answered with Question No. 223.

European Banking Authority

226. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will report on Ireland's bid to host the European Banking Authority. [50045/17]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The decision on the relocation of the European Banking Authority was made at the General Affairs Council meeting in Brussels on Monday 20 November. Ireland, along with 7 other Member States presented bids to host the EBA on its relocation from the UK, in the context of Brexit. After three rounds round of voting, Dublin and Paris were tied with 13 votes each. The selection of Paris was made by the drawing of lots, in line with the procedure set out in advance of the vote. The Irish Government made a very strong offer for the EBA to be located in Dublin. I wish to acknowledge the work carried out across government departments and agencies on our bid, which was well-received around Europe and viewed as strong and very competitive. It was a very considerable achievement to have won through 3 rounds of voting, successfully out performing very strong bids from a number of other key EU cities and capitals.

Minister Harris, the Department of Health and relevant agencies also put together a very comprehensive offer which was recognised around Europe as a very compelling case that Dublin could host the European Medicines Agency (EMA).

The competitive and political nature of the selection process necessitated a whole-of-Government effort to ensure that Ireland's case was put forward strongly and convincingly to Member State Governments and to elicit support in the voting process.

That is why we made a strategic decision some weeks ago to focus our efforts on gaining support for our EBA bid. By focusing on just one offer, we were able to be clear in our goal and it allowed us to engage in a more definitive manner in seeking the support of our partners in the EU.

I would like to congratulate Paris on being chosen as the new seat of the EBA. It is important that there is a smooth transition and successful relocation for the Authority, its staff and their families.

The EBA plays a vital role in the European system of Financial Supervision and it is essential that its work, which helps to protect consumers and contributes to the Union's financial stability, continues during the transition. The Central Bank of Ireland is an active member of the EBA and will continue to work with the Authority to achieve high quality prudential regulation and supervision across the banking sector.

Ministerial Meetings

227. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will report on his meeting with the UK Foreign Secretary, Boris Johnson, on 17 November 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50050/17]

238. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will report on his recent meeting with the UK Foreign Secretary, Boris Johnson; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50370/17]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): I propose to take Questions Nos. 227 and 238 together.

I welcomed UK Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs Boris Johnson last week for his first visit to Ireland since being appointed to the position in July 2016. I also routinely meet the Foreign Secretary at meetings of Foreign Ministers in an EU context and internationally.

Although the Foreign Secretary does not have lead responsibility for Brexit, the meeting provided a timely opportunity to exchange views on the ongoing Brexit negotiations. On Brexit, I underlined the need to ensure sufficient progress is made on all three exit issues in Phase 1 before discussions on a future relationship and any transitional arrangements can commence. I emphasised our desire for progress on Irish specific issues and on the need for the UK to provide strong political assurances and tangible commitments that recognise the unique circumstances of the island of Ireland. Ireland's commitment to protecting the Good Friday Agreement, in all its parts, and the gains of the peace process remains clear. In this regard, I repeated the Government's position that flexible and imaginative solutions are required.

I also reiterated that Ireland is fully behind Michel Barnier and his team and that any decision on sufficient progress will be made together by the EU 27 Heads of State and Government.

Ideas on a number of areas of mutual foreign policy interest, including the Middle East and Africa, were also shared. In addition, discussions focused on the strong British-Irish bilateral relationship and how this relationship can be strengthened into the future.

Ireland and the UK share many areas of mutual interest and concern and we will continue to work together on areas of commonality.

Ministerial Communications

228. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he has used a private e-mail account to send or receive official documents or positions on Brexit; and if so, the details of this correspondence. [50060/17]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): My Department's ICT Unit provides a secure Departmental email service. I also use a private email account. In the past, for operational reasons, that private account has also been used for communication on certain matters, such as diary issues, speeches and information updates. However, for some time now the policy has been that I use my Departmental secure account only for confidential official business, including on Brexit.

Foreign Conflicts

229. **Deputy Seán Crowe** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if his attention has been drawn to the fact that the president of an association in Turkey (details supplied) has been arrested and imprisoned; his views on the arrest; if he will request their release; and if the case will be raised with his Turkish counterpart. [50094/17]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Deputy will be aware that I have on many occasions expressed my grave concern at the large-scale arrests of public servants and academics, as well as many others, in the aftermath of the attempted coup in Turkey in July 2016. I am aware of the specific case to which Deputy Crowe refers, and our Embassy in Ankara has been keeping us informed of developments in the case, which is also being closely observed by the European Union. I reiterate that all those accused and charged

with a crime are entitled to a free and fair trial and must be accorded full due process, including access to their legal teams. I urge the Turkish authorities to ensure that the conditions for a fair and objective trial are fully observed, in this and all other cases, and have asked my officials to request an update from the Embassy of Turkey in Dublin.

Departmental Bodies Data

230. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the bodies under the aegis of his Department in which his Department provides in excess of €1 million funding per annum; the public funding received by these bodies; the bodies in which 50% or more of its income comes from public sources; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50116/17]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): There are no bodies under the aegis of my Department so the questions raised by the Deputy do not arise.

Ministerial Staff

231. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade to set out the number of special advisers employed, including the new special adviser recently recruited from a company (details supplied), by him; the roles these advisers perform; and the amount they are paid. [50256/17]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): There are currently two Special Advisers employed by my Department; the Special Adviser to the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Ms. Caitríona Fitzpatrick, and the Special Adviser to the Minister of State for European Affairs, Mr. Paul Fox.

The Special Adviser to the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade is on the Principal Officer salary scale. The Special Adviser to the Minister of State for European Affairs is on the Assistant Principal Officer salary scale. Both of these appointments were made in line with “Instructions to Personnel Officers - Ministerial Appointments for the 32nd Dáil” which included “Guidelines on staffing of Ministerial offices” issued by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

I have recently sought sanction from the Taoiseach to appoint a second Special Adviser to my own office. This appointment will also be in line with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform instructions.

Citizenship Status

232. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the number of entries on the foreign births register in each of the years 2014 to 2016, and to date in 2017. [50293/17]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): An application for Irish citizenship through Foreign Births Registration (FBR) can be submitted by any person with a grandparent born in any part of Ireland or by any person whose parent received Irish citizenship prior to the birth of the applicant. The number of new entries made in the Foreign Births Register for the years 2014 to 2016, and to date in 2017 are:

2014: 5,743

2015: 5,588

2016: 8,161

2017 to date: 16,655.

Passport Applications Data

233. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade to set out the number of passports issued to persons resident outside the State in each of the years 2007 to 2016 and to date in 2017. [50294/17]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): Irish citizens living outside the State may apply for an Irish passport through a number of channels, namely via the network of Irish Embassies, Consulates and Honorary Consuls worldwide, in person at the London Passport Office, through the online renewal system, or in the case of Northern Ireland through the Northern Ireland Passport Express service. The Passport Service does not compile data based on country of residence of applicants. Rather, tracking of application numbers is in general carried out against method of application. Including the main relevant categories of application methods, this suggests that number of passports issued to Irish citizens living outside the State in each of the years 2007 to 2016 and in 2017 to date is as follows:

Years	Passports issued
2007	139,101
2008	136,451
2009	140,992
2010	145,500
2011	130,633
2012	126,739
2013	126,537
2014	133,230
2015	148,112
2016	182,021
2017* (1 January to 22 November only)	178,299

Passport Applications Data

234. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade to set out the number of passports issued to persons living in Northern Ireland in each of the years 2007 to 2016 and to date in 2017. [50295/17]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): Irish citizens living in Northern Ireland may apply for an Irish passport through the Northern Ireland Passport Express system, the online renewal system or in-person at the Passport Office in the State. Tracking of application numbers is in general carried out against method of application, rather than address of the applicant. The number of passports issued to Irish citizens on foot of an application through the Northern Ireland Passport Express service in each of the years 2007 to 2016 and in

2017 to date is as follows:

Year	Passports issued via NI Passport Express
2007	31,734
2008	31,909
2009	32,183
2010	32,760
2011	30,181
2012	40,526
2013	43,227
2014	46,944
2015	52,861
2016	65,716
2017* (1 January to 22 November only)	63,797

Citizenship Status

235. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade to set out the number of persons registered with his Department's citizens' registration service as being resident abroad. [50296/17]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Citizens' Registration facility is administered by the Consular Directorate of my Department in concert with our network of Embassies and Consulates around the world. No registration facility is available within the Common Travel Area (Ireland/Great Britain). There are currently a total of 29,176 citizens registered on the system and this number is made up of a combination of holidaymakers, business travellers and longer-term migrants. The system is primarily intended to capture the contact details of Irish citizens in a country or region at a given time so that my Department can contact them in the event of a crisis. Levels of registration tend to be low in Europe and North America and proportionately higher amongst those travelling or living in other parts of the world.

Registration is completely voluntary and a matter for the individual concerned. The system does not enable us to distinguish between long-term residents and temporary visitors and my Department would have no basis on which to verify the residence status of individuals.

Passport Services

236. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade whether the Passport Office in Dublin can no longer take the credit card details that are on passport application forms in view of the fact that they cannot manually input the details into the credit card machine; if so, his plans to rectify same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50313/17]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Passport Office offers applicants a number of options for paying passport application fees, depending on which application method is used. For applications made in person at the Dublin or Cork Passport Offices, card payments may be taken only where both the card and the card-holder are present, with payments taken through secure chip & PIN terminals. Other means of payment such as

cash, postal orders or bank drafts are also accepted.

Passport Express is currently the most popular channel through which the Passport Office receives application. Payments for such applications are made directly through An Post at the time of submission. In that case, as any card payments are made by applicants in person at the Post Office, manual inputting of details by the Passport Office does not arise.

The online passport renewal service, which was launched in March of this year, takes secure payment by card online.

With the exception of a small number of overseas missions, where current practice is under active review, the Passport Office no longer accepts credit card details written on passport application forms for payment.

Undocumented Irish in the USA

237. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade to outline the status of progress with regard to the Irish undocumented in the United States of America. [49852/17]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Government continues to avail of all opportunities to raise immigration reform and the status of the undocumented Irish in the US issue with the US administration and with contacts on Capitol Hill. We do not, however, underestimate the size of the challenge. This policy area has been a deeply divisive issue within the US political system for decades, with pronounced disagreement, even within the same political parties, on the best way to deal with an issue which directly affects over 11 million people.

The Government has consistently engaged with both parties in a bipartisan way to address our longstanding concerns and this continues to be our approach, with officials from our Embassy in Washington DC in regular contact with the administration and with congressional contacts on both sides of the aisle.

For my own part, during my visit to New York for the UN General Assembly in September, I met with representatives of the four Irish Immigration Centres in the region and a representative of the US-wide Coalition of Irish Immigration Centres.

In addition, I met with a senior State Department official and I was able to further emphasise the Government's commitment to this issue when I travelled to Washington DC last month.

The Government's special envoy to Congress on the undocumented, Deputy John Deasy, accompanied me on that most recent visit and together we engaged with senior members of the US administration and with members of Congress, including the Congressional Friends of Ireland Group.

Outside of my own engagement on the issue, Deputy Deasy has visited the US three times since his appointment, in July, September and October.

In addition to contact at political level, our Ambassador in Washington D.C, Dan Mulhall, hosted a roundtable discussion on 25 October on the issue with Irish community key stakeholders, including the Coalition of Irish Immigration Centres.

The Government remains wholly committed to working with the US authorities to resolve the plight of the undocumented Irish, while respecting the right of the United States to set its

own immigration policies.

Question No. 238 answered with Question No. 227.

EU Issues

239. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade to outline the status of efforts being made by the EU to ensure that the rule of law and European principles and ideals are being adhered to in Poland; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50372/17]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The European Union is a community of shared values, committed to defending democracy, human rights and the rule of law. At both the May and September General Affairs Councils, Ireland along with a large number of other Member States, stressed the importance of the Rule of Law and urged renewed dialogue between Poland and the Commission. I hope that progress can be made through further dialogue between Poland and the Commission, with a view to resolving this issue.

EU Issues

240. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade to outline the status of efforts being made by the EU to ensure that the rule of law and European principles and ideals are being adhered to in Hungary; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50373/17]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The European Union is a community of shared values, committed to defending democracy, human rights and the rule of law. The current situation in Hungary was extensively debated in the European Parliament on 26 April last, at which time the First Vice-President of the European Commission Timmermans and Prime Minister Orbán made extensive contributions to the debate.

Fundamental values and the rule of law are a shared EU interest and call for a common approach. Ireland is supportive of the approach being taken by the European Commission in relation to developments in Hungary. The Hungarian Government has consistently made clear its willingness to engage with the Commission and I look forward to the outcome of that process.

Foreign Policy

241. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will report on Chile's recent general election; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50374/17]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The general elections which took place in Chile on 19 November consisted of both Presidential and congressional elections. In the Presidential ballot, the candidate of the 'Chile Vamos' coalition, former President Sebastian Piñera, won 36.6% of the vote, with the candidate of the Nueva Mayoría coalition, Alejandro Guillier, in second position with 22.7%.

Under Chilean electoral law, a second round election between the two candidates who secured the highest number of votes will now take place on 17 December. In the congressional

elections on 19 November, which were the first to take place under new arrangements which ended the former binomial electoral system, there were significant changes in representation in both the Senate and Congress, both of which have an enlarged number of seats.

As a result, whoever wins the second round of the Presidential elections may not command a congressional majority. It is noteworthy that female representation in the new Congress will increase from 16% to 23%.

I am pleased to have this opportunity to recall that Ireland enjoys excellent and warm bilateral relations with Chile. We look forward to developing that relationship in the months and years ahead, including through the opening of a resident embassy in Santiago, which I announced last month.

Foreign Policy

242. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will report on the situation in Venezuela; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50375/17]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The situation in Venezuela continues to be a matter of serious concern to the Government. Gubernatorial elections took place on 15 October amidst numerous reported incidences of irregularity and the results were not recognised by a large part of the opposition. This has accentuated the political polarisation in the country. The EU has called for full transparency on the results of the elections through a comprehensive and independent audit and Ireland has been wholly supportive of that position.

The establishment of an all-powerful Constituent Assembly has further eroded the democratic and independent institutions. Ireland and its EU partners have said that we cannot recognise the Constituent Assembly or its acts because of serious concerns about its legitimacy and representativeness.

On 13 November last, at a meeting of EU Foreign Ministers, which I attended, it was agreed unanimously to adopt restrictive measures, underscoring our concerns at the situation in the country. These measures consist of an embargo on arms and on related material that might be used for internal repression, as well as a legal framework for a travel ban and assets freeze.

Ireland has supported calls on the Venezuelan Government to urgently restore democratic legitimacy, including through free and fair elections, and on the opposition to continue engaging in a united manner towards a negotiated solution to the current tensions, in the interest of the country. Ireland is also fully supportive of regional and international efforts to find a lasting solution to the crisis.

Israeli Settlements

243. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade to outline the steps that have been taken by the State with regard to the ongoing expansion of illegal Israeli settlements; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50376/17]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): Ireland and our EU partners have consistently condemned the relentless expansion of Israeli settlements on Palestinian territory, which is unjust, provocative, and undermines the credibility of Israel's commitment to a peaceful solution to the conflict. The introduction and settlement of communities

of the occupying power, to alter the demography of the area, is unambiguously illegal under international law. The process of establishing settlements also inevitably involves violations of the rights of the occupied population, through seizure of their land, discriminatory treatment and other restrictions.

The Government has consistently and repeatedly conveyed these concerns to the Israeli authorities, and highlighted them in our interventions at EU, UN and international level. In addition, I have raised these concerns directly with Israeli leaders during my visit to Israel and Palestine in July. Most recently, I issued a public statement on 20 October condemning the latest settlement plans.

In addition, Ireland has consistently argued at EU level in favour of a clear differentiation by the EU and the international community between the State of Israel, on the one hand, and the illegal settlements on Palestinian land, on the other. This policy was explicitly supported by the UN Security Council in Resolution 2334 in December 2016. The EU has already taken a number of actions in this regard. These include guidelines on labelling of goods from settlements, advice to businesses on the risks of investing in settlements, and forbidding the spending of EU research funding in settlements.

I have made it a high priority personally to support efforts to reach a comprehensive peace agreement to the Middle East conflict. I have met with the US Middle East team to encourage their work, and to underline what the EU sees as the key parameters for an agreement. I have also taken an active role on this issue in the Foreign Affairs Council, urging my colleagues to continue our work to help preserve and create the political and physical space in which the two state solution can be achieved. I visited the region earlier this year and met with representatives of both parties, and I hope to do so again in the coming months.

Northern Ireland

244. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will report on the situation in Northern Ireland; the efforts being made to restore the Executive; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50377/17]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): As a co-guarantor of the Good Friday Agreement, the Government, working with the British Government, has spared no effort in supporting and facilitating talks on the formation of a new Executive, over many months.

However, devolved power-sharing government can only operate on the basis of an agreement reached between the two largest parties. The other parties represented in the Assembly - which have shown considerable patience - also have a critical role to play.

I am disappointed that, after several phases of negotiations in different formats, we still do not have an agreement to form an Executive. The issues under discussion – particularly those on language and culture – go to the heart of the divisions in society in Northern Ireland and agreement on them was always going to be challenging.

However, I have always believed that it remains possible to reach an agreed outcome which ensures implementation of previous agreements and reflects the core principles of the Good Friday Agreement and power-sharing itself - partnership, equality, and mutual respect. It remains my conviction that this is achievable.

The Government has consistently affirmed our unwavering commitment to the Good Friday

Agreement, and determination, as a co-guarantor of the Agreement, to secure the effective operation of all of its institutions.

The Taoiseach and I continue to engage with the British Government and the parties in Northern Ireland to give full effect to that commitment.

Departmental Contracts Data

245. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the public contracts between his Department and companies (details supplied) in each of the years 2011 to 2016; the value of each contract; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50402/17]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Department is responsible for two votes - Vote 28 (Foreign Affairs and Trade) and Vote 27 (International Co-operation). The Department commissions external expertise where highly specialised skills are not available within the Department and in particular where ongoing independent evaluation and audit of programmes and projects is required. Professional services provided by external experts has informed, and continues to inform on the Department's policies, allowing for a more targeted use of resources and greater accountability in the allocation of budgets. These services are procured by competitive tendering systems in accordance with procurement rules and comply with the overall value for money objective of the Department. The companies referenced in the question were engaged directly by our Missions abroad and provided professional services to the overseas development programme.

Year	Company Name	Contract Value
2011	n/a	n/a
2012	Deloitte & Touche	€15,600
2012	Deloitte & Touche	€16,099
2012	KPMG	€126,852.00
2013	Deloitte & Touche	€16,970
2013	Ernst & Young	€25,000.00
2013	KPMG	€40,646.00
2013	KPMG	US\$24,360
2014	Deloitte & Touche	€43,105.00
2015	Deloitte & Touche	€46,000.00
2015	Deloitte & Touche	€17,970
2015	KPMG	€49,400.00
2016	KPMG	€21,920.00

Election Monitoring Missions

246. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if a member of the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Trade travelled to Azerbaijan in October 2013 to observe the elections there; the name of the person; the capacity in which they travelled; if the person travelled as part of another organisation; if so, the name of the organisation and the reason therefor; if the person subsequently submitted a report on this election; if not, the

reason therefor; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50453/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Ciarán Cannon): International election monitoring missions play an important role in the promotion of democracy and human rights. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade maintains a roster of election observers for such missions. We aim to ensure that, when requested, Ireland is represented at an appropriate level on international observation missions for elections and constitutional referendums. Irish observers participate primarily in missions organised by the European Union and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

Following a request from the OSCE in 2013 to nominate election observers in respect of the Azerbaijan Presidential Elections, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade circulated the call to members of the Election Roster. Following receipt and consideration of applications, the Department nominated two Long Term Observers and eight Short Term Observers to observe these Elections. These observers travelled in their capacity as members of the election observation roster and while in country operated as part of the OSCE ODIHR election observation mission, as is normal practice for these missions.

None of these ten nominated observers were members of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Houses of the Oireachtas in 2013.

Foireann Roinne

247. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Gnóthaí Eachtracha agus Trádála cén líon iomlán foirne atá fostaithe ina Roinn faoi láthair; cé mhéid post atá daingnithe nó aitheanta ag an Roinn (i scéim teanga, nó ar aon bhealach eile) mar phoist a bhfuil riachtanas Gaeilge ag baint leo; cé mhéid duine atá ann ag a bhfuil líofacht i nGaeilge agus atá ag feidhmiú sna poist sin atá daingnithe nó aitheanta mar phoist a bhfuil riachtanas Gaeilge ag baint leo; an bhfuil sé beartaithe ag an tráth seo aon phost eile de chuid na Roinne a aithint mar phoist a bhfuil riachtanas Gaeilge. [50683/17]

248. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Gnóthaí Eachtracha agus Trádála cé mhéid folúntas a líonadh ina Roinn ó thús na bliana seo; cé mhéid de na folúntais sin a bhain le poist a bhí sainaitheanta mar phoist a raibh Gaeilge riachtanach ina leith; cé mhéid folúntas atá le líonadh faoi láthair agus cé mhéid de na folúntais siúd atá sainaitheanta mar fholúntais a bhfuil riachtanas Gaeilge ag baint leo. [50700/17]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): I propose to take Questions Nos. 247 and 248 together.

. Tá Oifigeach Gaeilge ag an Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha agus Trádála, mar atá leagtha amach i Scéim Teanga na Roinne. Tá Gaeilge líofa ag an té atá sa phost seo. Rinne mo Roinn ceapacháin anuraidh de bheirt dátheangach feidhmiúil eile dár seirbhísí saoránach bunlíne in Oifigí na bPasanna i gCorcaigh agus Baile Átha Cliath. Maíonn os cionn 80 baill foirne go bhfuil Gaeilge ar a dtail acu.

Bhí 1,577.6 ball foirne lán-aimseartha coibhéseacha fostaithe ag an Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha agus Trádála ar an 31 Deireadh Fómhair 2017. Tháinig 430 oifigigh san iomlán isteach sa Roinn go dtí seo i 2017. Astu siúd, bhí 273 le rólanna sealadacha agus séasúracha a líonadh, mar shampla sa tSeirbhís Pasanna. Líon an cuid eile dóibh rólanna a d'eascair as daoine ag éirí as, ardaithe céime, baill foirne eile ag fágáil na Roinne agus rólanna nua i líon teoranta d'aonaid. Cé nach raibh an Ghaeilge aitheanta mar riachtanas d'aon chuid de na rólanna a líonadh i 2017 go dtí seo, úsáideann cuid d'ár n-oifigigh an Ghaeilge ar bhonn rialta, go háirithe iad siúd

ag obair le saoránaigh Éireannacha thar lear. Moltar d'Oifigigh a gcuid scileanna Gaeilge a fhorbairt, agus tá mo Roinn sásta tacaíocht agus maoiniú a thabhairt ina leith seo. Ó thús na bliana seo, thugamar tacaíocht do 17 oifigigh le tabhairt faoi ranganna seachtracha i gConradh na Gaeilge agus i nGaelchultúr. Chomh maith leis sin, tugadh ceardlanna roimh-postála ag an Oifigeach Gaeilge d'oifigigh sular chuaigh siad ar phostáil chuig ár Mhisin thar lear i mbliana agus eagraíodh roinnt ócáidí le húsáid na Gaeilge sa Roinn a spreagadh.

Ní féidir uimhir a sholáthar don Teachta de líon na folúntais atá sa Roinn faoi láthair. Is féidir liom a rá, áfach, go bhfuil an Roinn ag líonadh rólanna go gníomhach sa chuid is mó de ghráid.

Departmental Communications

249. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the date and time in May 2015 the then Minister received the email referred to in Leaders' Questions on 21 November 2017. [50414/17]

250. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if the email from his Department referred to by the Taoiseach during Leaders' Questions on 21 November 2017 was found on 16 July 2017 by his Department or was sent to the Government from outside a government Department. [50419/17]

252. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when and the way in which the attention of the then Minister's personal staff or advisers was drawn to the email from his Department referred to by the Taoiseach during Leaders' Questions on 21 November 2017; and the actions they took in regard to same. [50421/17]

253. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the time of the email from his Department referred to by the Taoiseach during Leaders' Questions on 21 November 2017; the person it was addressed to; the persons it was copied to; the location from which it originated; and if the attention of persons in his Department was drawn to the contents of the email previously. [50422/17]

254. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the date of the conversation referred to in the email from his Department referred to by the Taoiseach during Leaders' Questions on 21 November 2017. [50423/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 249, 250 and 252 to 254, inclusive, together.

As the Deputy is aware, the relevant series of emails to which he refers have now been published on the website of the Department of Justice and Equality. They have also been disclosed to the Disclosures Tribunal.

This publication contains the relevant information which the Deputy is seeking.

It can be seen there that it was sent by an Assistant Secretary at 16:57 to the Private Secretary of the then Minister, copied to the Secretary General's Office, the then Deputy Secretary and a Principal Officer in the Department. The email originated in the Department and is an account of a telephone conversation between the Assistant Secretary and a senior official in the Office of the Attorney General. The telephone conversation which gave rise to the email of 15 May 2015 took place on the same day, that is 15 May 2015.

The email was subsequently forwarded to the then Minister and her advisors, and her Private Secretary subsequently replied on 25 May 2015 saying it had been noted by the Minister. It was also drawn to the attention of the Secretary General and his private secretary sent a similar reply. All parts of this thread have been published by my Department. There is no record of the email having been subsequently brought to the attention of persons other than those referred to above. The information was uncovered in the course of a trawl of emails in my Department that was undertaken.

Departmental Communications

251. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the reason the email from his Department referred to by the Taoiseach during Leaders' Questions on 21 November 2017, to which the Government's attention was drawn on 16 July 2017, was not sent to the Disclosures Tribunal until 21 July 2017. [50420/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I assume that the dates of 16 July and 21 July 2017 in the Deputy's question should read 16 and 21 November 2017 respectively.

For the sake of clarity I can confirm that the e-mail to which the Deputy refers was forwarded to the Disclosures Tribunal on 21 November 2017.

The original email of 15 May 2015 was located by officials in my Department on 9 November 2017. I became aware of the existence of the email on 13 November 2017 by way of a telephone call from the Secretary General of my Department. At that stage, my officials were ascertaining if there was any other correspondence or e-mails in or around the time of the May 2015 e-mail to ensure that a full disclosure was made to the Tribunal.

My officials, on 14 November 2017, sought the views of the Attorney General in relation to the discovery of the email to the Tribunal.

A wider check was initiated to ascertain if there was any other relevant correspondence and that search was completed on 16 November.

It was on 16 November that the Tánaiste was informed about the recovery of the email of 15 May 2015.

On 20 November, the Taoiseach was informed about the email.

As already outlined to the Deputy, my Department wrote to the Disclosures Tribunal on 21 November enclosing copies of the relevant emails. The Tribunal last week acknowledged the practical assistance of the Department of Justice to date.

As the Deputy is aware, further e-mails have come to light following a trawl of emails which was completed over the weekend. My Department disclosed these to the Tribunal yesterday, 27 November 2017 and published the full threads on my Department's website.

My statement to the Dáil this evening sets out these issues in greater detail.

Questions Nos. 252 to 254, inclusive, answered with Question No. 249.

Garda Station Refurbishment

255. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the provisions that will be made in view of the refusal of gardaí at Sligo Garda station to operate from the station; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50462/17]

278. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the provisions that will be made in view of the refusal of gardaí to operate from Sligo Garda station to operate from the station; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50379/17]

284. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the reason no remedial works have been carried out at Sligo Garda station as committed to by Garda management in October 2016; the timeframe for remedial works to commence and be completed; if these works will be immediately commenced; the process and status of the site acquisition and construction of a new regional Garda station in Sligo in view of previous statements (details supplied); his views on whether following the action of an organisations members on 20 November 2017, there is no functioning regional Garda Headquarters in Sligo or the Border counties. [50625/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 255, 278 and 284 together.

As the Deputies will appreciate, the Office of Public Works (OPW) has primary responsibility for the provision and maintenance of Garda accommodation and works closely with the Garda authorities in this regard. As Minister, I have no direct role in these matters.

It is, of course, a matter of concern when people consider that their working environment does not meet acceptable standards. The Deputies will be aware that the Garda Station Building and Refurbishment Programme 2016-2021 includes provision for a new Garda station to be provided in Sligo, together with stations in Macroom and Clonmel, by means of Public Private Partnership and I understand that the OPW is now actively progressing the acquisition of a suitable site in Sligo for the proposed development.

In relation to the current situation at the station, I am assured by the Garda Commissioner that arrangements are in place to ensure that the provision of policing services to the community in Sligo is fully maintained. As part of those arrangements a Public Office, Radio Control Room, and briefing facilities have been established on a temporary basis at another location in close proximity to the station.

The arrangements are reviewed on a daily basis to ensure that the policing service provided to the community of Sligo in terms of service to victims, responses to requests for assistance, high visibility patrols and checkpoints, etc., continues as normal.

I understand that Garda management engaged in lengthy discussions with the representatives of the GRA on Friday 17 November 2017 and set out a comprehensive set of written proposals with the objective of accelerating facility and remedial works at the station and making them a time-bound priority. The proposals focus on the refurbishment of the station and the improvement of services and amenities for the benefit of all the station party. In addition, the OPW has recently tendered for the provision of a new male and female two-storey locker facility to be in place by the end of April 2018. Planning permission for this has been secured and the tender documents are to be returned to the OPW by 6 December, 2017.

I also understand that Garda management has proposed the establishment of a working group, broadly representative of the station party and under the direction of the local Chief Superintendent, to drive consultation process and to address the issues of concern. I would encourage this dialogue in the interests of resolving those issues.

The Deputy will be aware that the GRA has engaged an external Consulting Engineer who has prepared a report in respect of the station. An Garda Síochána has requested the OPW, as the property owners and building agents of An Garda Síochána, to review that report and to advise on the suggested health and safety and fire safety breaches therein and any remedial actions that can be taken to address any breaches arising.

The OPW has advised that the station, having being built and refurbished prior to the introduction of the Building Regulations (1992), is deemed to be exempt from the Regulations and the requirement to obtain a Fire Certificate. However, the provisions of the Fire Services Acts of 1981 and 2003 are relevant to the station.

The Acting Chief Fire Officer in Sligo has advised that, following a fire safety inspection conducted on 25 November 2017, he is satisfied that Garda management are fulfilling their obligations under Section 18 (2) of the Fire Services Acts as far as is reasonably practicable and that, from a fire safety perspective, it is safe for personnel of An Garda Síochána to occupy the premises.

Further, on Monday 27 November 2017, two inspectors from the Health and Safety Authority (HSA) visited the station and identified some necessary improvement works of a relatively minor nature. Based on their observations and assurances given in relation to planned improvements that are to be made, the HSA advised that it would have no concerns about members of An Garda Síochána using the station as a place of work.

The OPW considers that, while the building requires some upgrade works in order to bring it completely in line with current regulations, it is safe and fit for occupation. These upgrade works were included in proposed scheme of works that were submitted to An Garda Síochána for consideration and approval (and referred to in the proposals made by Garda management to the GRA at the meeting on 17 November 2017).

Garda Stations

256. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to reallocate resources to Ballymore Eustace Garda station in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49917/17]

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, including responsibility for the formulation of proposals in relation to the opening and closing of Garda stations. As Minister, I have no role in the matter.

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, including Ballymore Eustace Garda station. 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.

As the Deputy will be aware, the Programme for a Partnership Government commits to 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.

The Garda Commissioner has recently submitted his final report in relation to this matter. The report recommends that stations at Ballinspittle, Co. Cork; Bawnboy, Co. Cavan; Leighlin-bridge, Co. Carlow; Donard, Co. Wicklow; together with Rush and Stepside, Co. Dublin, be reopened on a pilot basis.

I understand that the Commissioner has written to the Office of Public Works to progress the matter.

It is my intention to bring the report before Government shortly.

Garda Strength

257. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the details of Garda numbers by station in County Kildare. [49919/17]

258. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the details of Garda numbers by station in County Laois. [49920/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 257 and 258 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.

I am informed by the Commissioner that on the 30 September 2017, the latest date for which figures are readily available, the strength of the Laois/Offaly and Kildare Division was 324 and 341 respectively. There are also 17 Garda Reserves and 25 civilians attached to the Laois/Offaly Division and there are 20 Garda Reserves and 29 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 Armed Response Unit, the Garda National Economic Crime Bureau and the Garda National Drugs and Organised Crime Bureau.

I am further informed by the Commissioner that since the reopening of the Garda College in September 2014, close to 1,400 recruits have attested as members of An Garda Síochána and have been assigned to mainstream duties nationwide, 66 and 72 of whom have been assigned to the Laois/Offaly and Kildare Division respectively. In addition, another 200 trainee Garda are scheduled to attest next month 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 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. The substantial increase in Garda numbers is tangible progress on achieving this Government's vision of an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 personnel by 2021 comprising 15,000 Garda members, 2,000 Reserve members and 4,000 civilians.

I am pleased to say that Budget 2018 will support the continuation of this high level of investment in the Garda workforce and ensure that the vision of an overall workforce of 21,000 by 2021 remains on track. A further 800 new Garda Recruits will enter the Garda College, an additional 500 civilians will also be recruited to fill critical skills gaps across the organisation

and to facilitate the redeployment of Gardaí from administrative and technical duties to front-line operational duties. There are plans to strengthen the Garda Reserve with new Reserves expected to commence training early 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 needed to deploy increasing numbers of Gardaí across every Garda Division, including the Laois/Offaly Division and Kildare Division, in the coming years.

The information requested by the Deputy in relation to the strength of An Garda Síochána by county is not readily available in respect of An Garda Síochána as Gardaí are assigned on the basis of Divisions which do not necessarily accord with county boundaries. The information requested by the Deputy in relation to the number of Gardaí by station in the Laois/Offaly and Kildare Divisions as provided by the Commissioner is as set out in the tables attached as of 30 September 2017, the latest date for which figures are readily available.

STRENGTH OF THE KILDARE DIVISION 30 SEPTEMBER 2017			
DISTRICT	STATION	TOTAL	
KILDARE	ATHY	31	
	CASTLEDERMOT	4	
	KILDARE	34	
	MONASTEREVIN	5	
	NEWBRIDGE	46	
	RATHANGAN	3	
	TOTAL	123	
	LEIXLIP	CARBURY	7
		CELBRIDGE	9
KILCOCK		10	
LEIXLIP		60	
MAYNOOTH		12	
TOTAL		98	
NAAS	CLANE	7	
	KILCULLEN	2	
	NAAS	109	
	ROBERTSTOWN	2	
	TOTAL	120	
KILDARE TOTAL		341	

STRENGTH OF THE LAOIS / OFFALY DIVISION ON 30 SEPTEMBER 2017		
DISTRICT	STATION	TOTAL
BIRR	BANAGHER	5
	BIRR	32
	CLOGHAN	1
	FERBANE	3
	KILCORMAC	2
	KINNITTY	1

STRENGTH OF THE LAOIS / OFFALY DIVISION ON 30 SEPTEMBER 2017		
	SHINRONE	1
	TOTAL	45
PORTLAOISE	ABBEYLEIX	21
	ARLES	1
	BAL-LYLINAN	2
	BORRIS-IN-OSSORY	1
	CLONASLEE	1
	DURROW	1
	MOUNTMEL-LICK	5
	MOUN-TRATH	3
	PORTAR-LINGTON	14
	PORTLAOISE	131
	RATHD-OWNEY	2
	STRADBALLY	2
	TOTAL	184
TULLAMORE	CLARA	5
	DAINGEAN	2
	EDENDERRY	13
	RHODE	1
	TULLAMORE	74
	TOTAL	95
LAOIS/OFFALY TOTAL		324

Garda Strength

259. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the details of Garda numbers by county; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49921/17]

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.

Questions - Written Answers

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. The substantial increase in Garda numbers is tangible progress on achieving this Government's vision of an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 personnel by 2021 comprising 15,000 Garda members, 2,000 Reserve members and 4,000 civilians.

I am informed by the Commissioner that on 30 September 2017, the latest date for which figures are currently available, the strength of An Garda Síochána was 13,412 members.

I am further informed by the Commissioner that since the reopening of the Garda College in September 2014, close to 1,400 recruits have attested as members of An Garda Síochána and have been assigned to mainstream duties nationwide. In addition, another 200 trainee Garda are scheduled to attest next month which will see Garda numbers, taking account of projected retirements, increase to around the 13,500 mark by year end - increase of 500 since the end of 2016.

I am pleased to say that Budget 2018 will support the continuation of this high level of investment in the Garda workforce and ensure that the vision of an overall workforce of 21,000 by 2021 remains on track. A further 800 new Garda Recruits will enter the Garda College, an additional 500 civilians will also be recruited to fill critical skills gaps across the organisation and to facilitate the redeployment of Gardaí from administrative and technical duties to front-line operational duties. There are plans to strengthen the Garda Reserve with new Reserves expected to commence training early 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 needed to deploy increasing numbers of Gardaí across every Garda Division in the coming years.

The information requested by the Deputy in relation to the strength of An Garda Síochána by county is not readily available in respect of An Garda Síochána as Gardaí are assigned on the basis of Divisions which do not necessarily accord to county boundaries. The Garda strength by Division as advised by the Commissioner is as set out in the attached spreadsheet as of the 30 September 2017 (that latest date for which figures are currently available).

Garda Strength by Division as of 30 September 2017

Garda Strength by Division as of 30 September 2017	
DIVISION	Total
CAVAN / MONAGHAN	321
CLARE	305
CORK CITY	658
CORK NORTH	312
CORK WEST	287
D.M.R. EAST	373
D.M.R. NORTH	654
D.M.R. NORTH CENTRAL	598
D.M.R. SOUTH	526
D.M.R. SOUTH CENTRAL	605
D.M.R. WEST	652
DONEGAL	389

Garda Strength by Division as of 30 September 2017	
GALWAY	570
KERRY	312
KILDARE	341
KILKENNY/CARLOW	318
LAOIS / OFFALY	324
LIMERICK	554
LOUTH	305
MAYO	315
MEATH	293
ROSCOMMON / LONGFORD	305
SLIGO / LEITRIM	297
TIPPERARY	372
WATERFORD	285
WESTMEATH	267
WEXFORD	276
WICKLOW	297

Departmental Bodies Data

260. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of vacancies in each State board under the aegis of his Department, in tabular form. [49940/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As requested by the Deputy please find below in tabular form vacancies on each State board under my Department's remit.

Name of Board	Number of vacancies
Valuation Tribunal	3
Classification of Films Appeal Board	2
Censorship of Publications Appeal Board	5
Judicial Appointments Advisory Board	1
Courts Service Board	3
Legal Aid Board	1
Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission	1
Policing Authority	1
Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission	7

Cabinet Committees

261. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the process by which a chairperson and members of the group that will examine the scope of the updated research on sexual abuse and violence here will be appointed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49968/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The terms of reference and membership of a scoping group to consider the availability of data and make recommendations on a study to identify the prevalence of sexual abuse and violence in Ireland today and emerging trends was considered by the Cabinet Committee on Social Policy at a meeting on 16 November. Ms Dorothy Watson, Associate Research Professor, Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) and adjunct Professor of Sociology at Trinity College Dublin has accepted an invitation to Chair the Group. Professor Brendan Whelan, expert in survey methods and ex-Director of the ESRI has also accepted an invitation to join the group. A tender process is in train to secure the membership of two academics with appropriate expertise in qualitative and quantitative data gathering in respect of sexual abuse and violence. Invitations have issued to the following organisations to nominate a senior official to the group:

- Department of Health
- Department of Children and Youth Affairs
- Tusla
- Central Statistics Office

My Department will also be represented on the group.

The group will consult with key external groups and organisations as appropriate.

Once the final membership of the group is available its membership and terms of reference will be published.

Departmental Bodies Data

262. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the names of persons he has appointed to each State board under the aegis of his Department that have not come from the Public Appointments Service list of suitable candidates, in tabular form. [50002/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The question is being read to cover the period subsequent to my appointment on 14th June 2017.

The information requested by the Deputy in relation to persons appointed to State boards under my Department's remit that have not come through the Public Appointments Service list of suitable candidates is laid out below.

Name of Board	Name of person appointed and position on board	Where was appointment made from
Private Security Authority	Mr Noel Lappin Discretionary non defined appointee	Reappointed for 2nd term. Appointed under Section 7(1) Private Security Services Act 2004 (as amended)
Private Security Authority	Ms Geraldine Kelly Practising legal professional of not less than 5 years standing	Reappointed for 2nd term. Appointed under Section 7(1) Private Security Services Act 2004 (as amended)

Name of Board	Name of person appointed and position on board	Where was appointment made from
Private Security Authority	Assistant Commissioner John O'Driscoll Representative of An Garda Síochána	Reappointed for 2nd term. Appointed under Section 7(1) Private Security Services Act 2004 (as amended)
Private Security Authority	Mr John Garry Representative of the Department of Justice and Equality	Reappointed for 2nd term. Appointed under Section 7(1) Private Security Services Act 2004 (as amended)
Private Security Authority	Mr Bryan Redmond Representative of the Department of Education and Skills	Reappointed for 2nd term. Appointed under Section 7(1) Private Security Services Act 2004 (as amended)
Private Security Authority	Ms Siobhan Carew Staff representative of the Authority elected by secret ballot of the staff of the Authority	Reappointed for 2nd term. Appointed under Section 7(1) Private Security Services Act 2004 (as amended)

Direct Provision System

263. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of the McMahon report recommendations that have been fully implemented, partially implemented and that have yet to be implemented respectively. [50013/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Report of the Working Group to Report to Government on Improvements to the Protection Process, including Direct Provision and Supports to Asylum Seekers, also known as the Justice McMahon report, was published in June 2015. Its recommendations have implications for a number of Government Departments and services.

My Department has since published three progress reports on the implementation of its 173 recommendations; the first in June 2016, the second in February of this year and a third and final report in July of this year. All three reports are available to view on my Department's website www.justice.ie.

The final progress report shows that 133 recommendations have been reported as fully implemented and a further 36 are in progress or partially implemented. This represents a 98% full or partial implementation rate.

On 21 November 2017, the Government approved an opt into the EU (Recast) Reception Conditions Directive (2013/33/EU). The Directive provides a framework that will enable international protection applicants to access the work-force in circumstances where their application for international protection status has not received a first instance decision within the timeframe set by the Directive. By opting into the Directive, another important recommendation of the Justice McMahon report will be implemented, which will also bring us into line with the European Union norm.

Direct Provision System

264. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if a memo has been brought to Cabinet on the Supreme Court decision on the right of those in direct provision to work; if he will publish the memo; and the decisions that were taken as a result of this decision. [50014/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Supreme Court judgment in the case of *N.V.H. v. The Minister for Justice and Equality* found, on 30 May last, that in an international protection system with no temporal limits as to when the application process will be concluded, an absolute prohibition on the right to work for international protection applicants is contrary to the right to seek employment under the Constitution. The Court recognised 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.

I want to clarify something in the Deputy's question. This ruling applies to all those in the protection process whether they are relying on State accommodation and services or not.

Following the approval of Government, I established an Inter-Departmental Taskforce in July to examine the wide-ranging implications of the judgment, and to consider appropriate solutions. The Taskforce was comprised of representatives from nine Government Department, along with the Office of the Attorney General.

On 21 November 2017, the Government approved the recommendations of the Taskforce, including the key recommendation that the State should respond to the judgment by opting-in to the EU (Recast) Reception Conditions Directive (2013/33/EU).

I will move the required Motions to seek approval in the Houses of the Oireachtas for our participation in the Directive at the earliest opportunity. Following the approval of both Houses, the opt in procedure with the formal notifications to the European Council and the European Commission will commence. The European Commission then has four months from receipt of this letter to confirm our participation. During these four months, the State will be required to demonstrate to the Commission how it is compliant with each Article in the Directive.

The EU Directive provides, inter-alia, that international protection applicants shall have access to the labour market no later than nine months from the date the application for international protection was lodged, if a first instance decision has not been taken and if the delay cannot be attributed to the applicant.

The Government has established an Implementation Group to oversee the opt-in procedure and the practical arrangements for facilitating access to the labour market for eligible applicants. The Group will be drawn from the membership of the Taskforce, supplemented by the participation of relevant operational areas in my own Department and in other Departments as required.

The Deputy will be aware that the principle of Cabinet confidentiality applies to all Memoranda for Government.

Fire Service

265. **Deputy Michael Harty** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his views on whether many fire service Halloween callouts are prompted by anti-social behaviour and that attacks on fire service personnel are deplorable; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50019/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am, of course, concerned about any attacks against members of fire personnel, and can assure the Deputy that I utterly condemn all attacks on our emergency services personnel. Such acts represent a blatant disregard for the safety of the brave men and women who work in our emergency services, who risk their lives every day in the service of the people of our State.

The Deputy will appreciate that the fire services do not come within my remit, however, I am assured that An Garda Síochána provide every appropriate assistance to emergency service personnel when they are requested to do so. Particular liaison is maintained with fire services and local authorities in the run up to Halloween and on Halloween night itself in the context of overall policing plans to respond to issues of public safety and anti-social behaviour which can arise during this period.

Furthermore, I can advise the Deputy that there is specific legislation in place to deal with attacks on emergency workers in front-line positions, including fire service personnel.

The Criminal Justice (Public Order) Act 1994, as amended by the Criminal Justice Act 2006, provides explicit statutory protection for what are termed “peace officers”, which include members of the Garda Síochána, prison officers, members of the fire brigade, ambulance personnel and members of the Defence Forces. The Act also covers those working in medical services in hospitals, including doctors, nurses, psychiatrists and others involved in the provision of treatment and care. Section 19 of the 1994 Act provides that any person who assaults or threatens to assault any of these front-line workers is guilty of an offence and is liable on summary conviction to a fine of up to €5,000 or a term of imprisonment of up to 12 months or both, or on conviction on indictment to a fine or imprisonment for a term of up to 7 years or both. The maximum sentence was increased from 5 years to 7 years under the 2006 Act.

It is also an offence under the 1994 Act, as amended, to resist, wilfully obstruct or impede a peace officer, or medical staff in a hospital, in the course of carrying out their work. The penalty on summary conviction for such an offence is a fine of up to €2,500 or imprisonment for a term of up to 6 months or both.

In addition, in the case of assault causing serious harm, an offender can be prosecuted under the Non-Fatal Offences Against the Person Act 1997 which deals comprehensively with a wide range of assault provisions, the more serious of which carry heavy penalties. That Act provides for penalties of up to 5 years in prison for an offence of assault causing harm and for a penalty of life imprisonment for an offence of causing serious harm. This general law relating to assault has application to all citizens, including front-line emergency workers such as fire service personnel.

As already outlined, the law recognises the need to protect members of the emergency services carrying out their duties and provides strong penalties where offences against front-line workers are committed.

Family Reunification Policy

266. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to introduce measures to allow family members join refugees and asylum seekers here; the public policy implications of such measures; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50026/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): On 14 November last, together with my colleague, the Minister of State with special responsibility for Equality, Immigration and Integration, David Stanton T.D., I announced a new scheme of family reunifica-

tion in support of refugees and their families, as part of the Government's commitments under the Irish Refugee Protection Programme (IRPP). The new Family Reunification Humanitarian Admission Programme (FRHAP) will see up to 530 immediate family members of refugees from established conflict zones come to Ireland as part of our overall commitment to accept 4,000 persons under the IRPP.

I will operate this humanitarian admission programme under my Ministerial discretionary powers and it will be in addition to the family reunification provisions provided for in the International Protection Act 2015. To allow the maximum number of families to benefit from the scheme sponsors will be asked to prioritise a small number of family members for admission. I am conscious that the measure is being introduced at a time when our national housing supply is under strain. To minimise the impact of the programme, priority may be given to sponsors who can meet the accommodation requirements of eligible family members.

Additional details on the operation of the programme will be announced on the websites of the Department of Justice and Equality (www.justice.ie) and the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (www.inis.gov.ie) in the coming weeks following consultations with UNHCR.

Ministerial Communications

267. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he has used a private email account to send or receive official documents or positions on Brexit; and if so, the details of this correspondence. [50063/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I can confirm that I have never used my private e-mail account to send or receive any official documents on Brexit.

Commercial Rates Valuation Process

268. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of appeals made regarding rateable valuations to the Valuation tribunal for each local authority area under the revaluation 2017 programme, in tabular form. [50098/17]

269. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of appeals made regarding rateable valuations of commercial property to the Valuation tribunal for each local authority area revalued under the national revaluation programme, in tabular form. [50099/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 268 and 269 together.

The Valuation Acts 2001 to 2015 provide for the valuation of all commercial and industrial property for rating purposes. The Commissioner of Valuation is independent in the performance of his functions under the Acts and the making of valuations for rating purposes is his sole responsibility. I, as Minister for Justice and Equality, have no role in decisions in this regard.

Having a modern valuation base is very important for the levying of commercial rates on a fair and equitable basis across all economic sectors. As the Deputy will be aware this has been the policy of successive governments and is the express purpose of the National Revaluation Programme now being rolled out by the Valuation Office.

In relation to the information sought, it should be noted that prior to the commencement of

the Valuation (Amendment) Act 2015 a ratepayer could appeal a final valuation firstly to the Commissioner of Valuation and subsequently to the Valuation Tribunal. Since the passing of this Act, appeals are now made solely to the Valuation Tribunal. Appeals from the recently completed Reval 2017 programme (including the second revaluation of South Dublin County Council rating authority area) were made under the new provisions for the first time. It continues to be the case that, when a ratepayer is provided with a proposed valuation earlier in the valuation process, he/she can make representations to the Valuation Office if dissatisfied.

The information sought by the Deputy is relation to appeals to the Valuation Tribunal is contained in the following table.

Year Revaluation Completed	Rating Authority	Number of appeals to Valuation Tribunal	Overall Appeal Rate to Valuation Tribunal (%)
2007	South Dublin County Council	228	3.29%
2009	Fingal County Council	100	1.63%
2010	Dún Laoghaire/ Rathdown County Council	303	5.83%
2013	Dublin City Council	927	4.54%
2013	Waterford City and County Council	74	1.87%
2014	Limerick City and County Council	68	1.03%
2017	Carlow County Council	119	5.98%
2017	Kildare County Council	225	4.45%
2017	Kilkenny County Council	196	6.85%
2017	Leitrim County Council	33	3.05%
2017	Longford County Council	47	3.36%
2017	Offaly County Council	62	2.49%
2017	Roscommon County Council	93	4.45%
2017	Sligo County Council	98	4.42%
2017	South Dublin County Council (2nd Reval)	274	3.97%
2017	Westmeath County Council	124	4.16%

Departmental Bodies Data

270. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the bodies under the aegis of his Department in which provide in excess of €1 million funding per annum to these bodies; the public funding received by these bodies; the bodies in which 50% or more of its income comes from public sources; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50119/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I wish to advise the Deputy that in excess of €1 million was provided under my Department's Vote to the following bodies during 2016, the most recent full year for which such information is available. I am informed that all of these bodies receive 50% or more of their income from public sources.

Body	€
Foroige	5,395,315
Youth Work Ireland	4,297,649
P.A.C.E.	1,595,030
Crosscare	1,563,479
The National Collective of Community Based Women's Networks	1,385,000
Pavee Point	1,316,377
IASIO	1,231,250
Le Cheile	1,139,000

Crime Data

271. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the crime statistics for the Garda R and J districts for the first ten months of 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50153/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will be aware, the Central Statistics Office (CSO), as the national statistical agency, is responsible for the compilation and publication of the official recorded crime statistics. To be of assistance, I have requested the CSO to forward the available statistics directly to the Deputy.

Garda Strength

272. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of gardaí assigned to the Tipperary, Waterford and Carlow/Kilkenny Garda divisions in the past four years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50164/17]

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 on the 30 September 2017, the latest date for which figures are readily available, the strength of the Tipperary Division, Waterford Division and the Kilkenny/Carlow Division was 372, 285 and 318 respectively. There are also 18 Garda Reserves and 40 civilians attached to the Tipperary Division, 19 Reserves and 30 civilians attached to the Waterford Division and 26 Reserves and 31 civilians attached to the Kilkenny/Carlow 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 Armed Response Unit, the Garda National Economic Crime Bureau and the Garda National Drugs and Organised Crime Bureau.

I am further informed by the Commissioner that since the reopening of the Garda College in September 2014, close to 1,400 recruits have attested as members of An Garda Síochána and have been assigned to mainstream duties nationwide, 35, 49 and 44 of whom were assigned to the Tipperary Division, Waterford Division and the Kilkenny/Carlow Division respectively. In addition, another 200 trainee Garda are scheduled to attest next month 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 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. The substantial increase in Garda numbers is tangible progress on achieving this Government's vision of an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 personnel by 2021 comprising 15,000 Garda members, 2,000 Reserve members and 4,000 civilians.

I am pleased to say that Budget 2018 will support the continuation of this high level of investment in the Garda workforce and ensure that the vision of an overall workforce of 21,000 by 2021 remains on track. A further 800 new Garda Recruits will enter the Garda College, an additional 500 civilians will also be recruited to fill critical skills gaps across the organisation and to facilitate the redeployment of Gardaí from administrative and technical duties to front-line operational duties. There are plans to strengthen the Garda Reserve with new Reserves expected to commence training early 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 needed to deploy increasing numbers of Gardaí across every Garda Division, including the Tipperary Division, Waterford Division and the Kilkenny/Carlow Division, in the coming years.

The strength of the Tipperary Division, Waterford Division and the Kilkenny/Carlow Division in each of the years 2013-2016 and on 30 September 2017, the latest date for which figures are readily available from An Garda Síochána, are as set out in the following table.

	Garda Strength by Division 2013 - 2017				
Division	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017*
Tipperary	371	359	354	364	372
Waterford	274	274	282	277	285
Kilkenny/ Carlow	289	279	284	296	318

*Up to 30 September 2017

Garda Expenditure

273. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of Garda mountain bikes purchased in 2016 and to date in 2017; if further funding has been made available to purchase additional bikes in 2018. [50228/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will appreciate, decisions in relation to the provision and allocation of Garda resources, including mountain bikes, are a matter for the Garda Commissioner in the light of his identified operation-

al demands and the availability of resources and I, as Minister, have no direct role in the matter.

I am informed by the Garda authorities that no mountain bikes were purchased by An Garda Síochána in 2016 and to date in 2017.

I am further informed that in late 2015, 100 mountain bikes were purchased and that these were distributed to Divisions in early 2016. I understand that, based on operational requirements, there are no plans to purchase additional bikes in 2018.

Ministerial Meetings

274. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to meet the US Secretary for Homeland Security. [50230/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I have no plans at present to meet the US Secretary for Homeland Security.

Garda Equipment

275. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to provide funding to purchase high powered unmarked motorcycles for the Garda traffic corps. [50231/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will appreciate, decisions in relation to the provision and allocation of Garda vehicles are a matter for the Garda Commissioner in the light of his identified operational demands and the availability of resources and I, as Minister, have no direct role in the matter.

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.

I am informed by the Garda authorities that, as at 13 November 2017 (the latest date for which figures are available), there were some 131 motorcycles in the Garda fleet and that some 12 marked 1200cc motorcycles were recently delivered to An Garda Síochána and will be allocated shortly.

I am further informed that there are currently no plans to purchase unmarked motorcycles.

Deportation Orders Data

276. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of deportation orders which have been signed in each of the years 2000 to 2016, inclusive, and to date in 2017, on a yearly basis; the number of deportations that have been effected on a yearly basis in each of the years 2000 to 2016, inclusive, and to date in 2017; the cost for same for the same period; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50311/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that the figures requested by the Deputy are as set out in the tables below.

The statutory criteria which must be considered in relation to a decision to make a deportation order under section 3(6) of the Immigration Act 1999 include national security and public policy, the character and conduct of the person concerned and the common good. In determining whether to make a deportation order, in addition to the factors set out in Section 3(6) of the Immigration Act 1999, all relevant constitutional and international human rights arising including those enshrined in the Refugee Convention, the UN Convention Against Torture and the European Charter of Human Rights must be considered. The question of not returning a person to a place where certain fundamental rights would be breached (or non refoulement as it is commonly referred to) is also fully considered in every case when deciding whether or not to make a deportation order. This involves consideration of whether returning the person would result in the life or freedom of that person being threatened on account of his or her race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, or whether the person would be subjected to torture or to inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

A deportation order requires the person concerned to remove themselves from the State and it is only where they fail to do so that the State is forced to remove them and enforce the rule of law. The enforcement of deportation orders is an operational matter for the Garda National Immigration Bureau (GNIB). The costs for effecting deportations for the period requested by the Deputy of almost 18 years is in the order of €16.2m.

Deportation orders signed by Year 2000 to date (Up to and including 23/11/2017)

Year	Deportations Signed
2000	767
2001	1,690
2002	2,052
2003	2,093
2004	2,641
2005	1,723
2006	1,406
2007	373
2008	705
2009	1,012
2010	1,027
2011	1,361
2012	1,624
2013	1,776
2014	732
2015	760
2016	1,191
2017	829
Total	23,762

Deportations Effected by year 2000 - 2017 (up to and including 23/11/2017).

Year	Deportations effected
2000	177
2001	311
2002	410
2003	522

Year	Deportations effected
2004	554
2005	386
2006	293
2007	140
2008	160
2009	336
2010	341
2011	279
2012	302
2013	209
2014	114
2015	251
2016	428
2017	129
Total	5,342

Deportation Orders Data

277. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the top three nationalities deported in each of the years 2000 to 2016, inclusive, and to date in 2017; the number of persons who have been refused leave to enter the State in each of the years 2000 to 2016, inclusive, and to date in 2017; and according to nationality the number that were failed asylum applications; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50312/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that the information requested by the Deputy is as set out in the tables below.

The statutory criteria which must be considered in relation to a decision to make a deportation order under section 3(6) of the Immigration Act 1999 include national security and public policy, the character and conduct of the person concerned and the common good. In determining whether to make a deportation order, in addition to the factors set out in Section 3(6) of the Immigration Act 1999, I must also consider all relevant constitutional and international human rights arising including those enshrined in the Refugee Convention, the UN Convention Against Torture and the European Charter of Human Rights. The question of not returning a person to a place where certain fundamental rights would be breached (or non refoulement as it is commonly referred to) is fully considered in every case when deciding whether or not to make a deportation order. This involves consideration of whether returning the person would result in the life or freedom of that person being threatened on account of his or her race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, or whether the person would be subjected to torture or to inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

A deportation order requires the person concerned to remove themselves from the State and it is only where they fail to do so that the State is forced to remove them and enforce the rule of law.

It is to be noted that the enforcement of deportation orders is an operational matter for the Garda National Immigration Bureau (GNIB).

Table 1: Individuals deported broken down by top 3 Nationalities from 2000 to 2017 (up to and including 25/11/2017)

Year	Nationality 1	Nationality 2	Nationality 3
2000	Poland	Romania	Czech Republic
2001	Romania	Czech Republic	Poland
2002	Romania	Czech Republic	Poland
2003	Romania	Czech Republic	China
2004	Romania	Nigeria	Moldova
2005	Nigeria	Romania	China
2006	Romania	Nigeria	China
2007	China	Nigeria	Brazil
2008	Nigeria	China	Brazil
2009	Nigeria	South Africa	Brazil
2010	Nigeria	Georgia	Moldova
2011	Nigeria	South Africa	Georgia
2012	Nigeria	Pakistan	Georgia
2013	Nigeria	China (Including Hong Kong)	Mauritius
2014	China (Including Hong Kong)	Nigeria	Malaysia
2015	Nigeria	China (Including Hong Kong)	Mauritius
2016	Nigeria	China (Including Hong Kong)	Ghana
2017 (to date)	China (Including Hong Kong)	Nigeria	Pakistan

Table 2: The number of persons that have been refused leave to enter the State in each of the years 2002 to 2017 is provided in the following table.

Year	Number of refused leave to land
2000	5,852
2001	5,388
2002	4,417
2003	4,827
2004	4,477
2005	4,433
2006	5,366
2007	5,854
2008	5,390
2009	3,252
2010	2,941
2011	2,308
2012	1,958
2013	1,844
2014	2,147
2015	3,451

Year	Number of refused leave to land
2016	3,951
2017 to 1/9 *	2,578

* The figure for 2017 is provisional and subject to change.

Table 3: Number of individuals who claimed asylum who were then deported broken down by top 3 Nationalities from 2000 to 2017 (up to and including 25/11/2017)

Year	Nationality 1	Number	Nationality 2	Number	Nationality 3	Number
2000	Poland	57	Romania	55	Czech Republic	30
2001	Romania	106	Czech Republic	60	Poland	44
2002	Romania	103	Czech Republic	62	Poland	57
2003	Romania	148	Czech Republic	66	Poland	35
2004	Romania	226	Nigeria	73	Moldova	53
2005	Nigeria	130	Romania	113	Croatia	17
2006	Romania	93	Nigeria	78	Moldova	18
2007	China	35	Nigeria	33	Moldova	11
2008	Nigeria	81	China	13	Moldova	6
2009	Nigeria	213	Georgia	13	South Africa	9
2010	Nigeria	195	Georgia	43	Moldova	9
2011	Nigeria	119	Georgia	18	Moldova	17
2012	Nigeria	77	Pakistan	35	Georgia	27
2013	Nigeria	51	Albania	15	Congo, The Democratic Republic Of The	10
2014	Nigeria	20	China (Including Hong Kong)	12	Somalia	6
2015	Nigeria	107	China (Including Hong Kong)	15	Congo, The Democratic Republic Of The	8
2016	Nigeria	173	China (Including Hong Kong)	56	Ghana	16
2017	China (Including Hong Kong)	96	Nigeria	27	Pakistan	15

Question No. 278 answered with Question No. 255.

Departmental Contracts Data

279. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the public contracts between his Department and companies (details supplied) in each of the years 2011 to 2016, inclusive; the value of each contract; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

[50405/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I wish to advise the Deputy that the following payments were made to the specified companies for the requested years.

Year	Ernst & Young	Deloitte & Touche	KPMG
2011	-	€6,061	-
2012	-	-	-
2013	-	-	-
2014	-	-	-
2015	€27,148	-	-
2016	€17,737	€2,767	-

Departmental Communications

280. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the meaning of the Taoiseach's comment during Leaders' Questions on 21 November 2017 regarding the search for an email (details supplied); and the reason his Department was looking for the email referred to by the Taoiseach. [50413/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I have looked at the transcript referred to in the Deputy's question and it is clear that it is referring to the email of 15 May 2015. On 9 November, the Deputy submitted a series of questions to my Department for answer on 14 November which for the first time specified a date on which a phone call was alleged to have been made by the Commissioner to the Secretary General of my Department. Once a specific date was mentioned, an email search was carried out for that date, in order to establish if there was any record of contacts of the type concerned on that date. During the search the email of 15 May was found. Further searches were then carried out to ascertain if there were other emails of relevance. That search located a number of emails linked to the email of 15 May 2015. These were then all disclosed voluntarily to the Disclosures Tribunal.

Subsequently, as the Deputy is aware, An Taoiseach requested that a general trawl of emails be carried to ascertain whether there were other emails, in addition to that of 15 May 2015, which might be relevant to the issue of the Garda Commissioner's legal approach to the O'Higgins Commission of Investigation.

That trawl covered the period from 19 December 2014 to 11 May 2016 and was concluded over the weekend. A number of other emails were located which were sent to the Disclosures Tribunal on 27 November and have been made available publicly.

Ministerial Communications

281. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the times and formats of all communications between the Secretary General of his Department and the then Minister on 15 May 2015. [50417/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will appreciate, given the passage of time, it is a challenge to definitively ascertain information on all possible forms of communication covered by the question.

However, in order to endeavour to answer this question as comprehensively as possible, I have asked the Secretary General to review his diary and e-mail communications from 15 May 2015.

There were no meetings listed with the then Minister for Justice and Equality, Frances Fitzgerald on the day in question. From the diary record of the Private Office to the Minister, it appears that the then Minister attended a number of constituency related events that day and may not have been present in the Department of Justice and Equality.

The Secretary General had one direct email communication with the then Minister on that day, in relation to a vacancy in GSOC.

Staff of the Secretary General and Minister's Offices would have also engaged in email, telephone and verbal communications on a range of issues such as diary matters and general administration issues.

Garda Recruitment

282. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when the next round of recruitment from the Garda panels that have been created will take place; the number of persons that will be taken from the panel at a time; the timeframe on the frequency with which persons will be drawn from the panel (details supplied). [50524/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): In accordance with the Garda Síochána (Admissions and Appointments) Regulations 2013 the Public Appointments Service, on behalf of the Garda Commissioner, manages the initial recruitment stages for the selection of Garda trainees. The final stages of the recruitment process in which candidates are vetted, and complete a physical competency test and a medical examination, are managed by the Commissioner and I, as Minister, have no direct involvement in the matter.

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 that will have been recruited by the end of this year since the reopening of the Garda College in September 2014.

This is an ambitious programme of accelerated recruitment and will require a continuous pipeline of suitable candidates. I am advised by the Commissioner that a further 800 candidates are due to enter the Garda College next year in four separate intakes. The proposed dates of these intakes in 2018 are January, April, August and October. These dates are subject to change.

I am further advised by the Commissioner that An Garda Síochána is currently calling candidates from the January 2016 and September 2016 competitions for the January 2018 intake. It is expected that candidates from the 2017 competition will enter the College towards the middle of 2018.

Any candidate for a position as a Garda trainee should contact the Public Appointments Service or the Garda Appointments Office if they have any queries in relation to their application

Court Accommodation Provision

283. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the position regarding the securing of a new courthouse for Tralee, County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50611/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will be aware, under the provisions of the Courts Service Act 1998, management of the courts, including the provision of accommodation for court sittings, is the responsibility of the Courts Service, which is independent in exercising its functions.

However, in order to be of assistance to the Deputy, I have had enquiries made and the Courts Service has informed me that, as part of its provincial capital building programme, one of the objectives is to provide improved court accommodation in Tralee.

The Courts Service has advised that it appreciates that the courthouse on Ashe Street is an imposing historic building in the centre of the town, however the scope for refurbishing and developing the courthouse to provide the range of services expected in a modern courthouse is extremely limited due to the nature of the building and the constrained nature of the site.

Accordingly, the Courts Service is currently considering a number of options for Tralee Courthouse including the level of extension and refurbishment that is achievable within the confines of the existing site; whether it is feasible to consider refurbishment and extension of the existing courthouse; if an adjacent town centre site could be purchased; or whether it should build a completely new courthouse on a new site.

Tralee is one of a number of provincial city/county town venues nationwide still requiring new or upgraded courthouse accommodation and collectively these venues will be the next priority for investment in courthouse facilities outside the capital.

Question No. 284 answered with Question No. 255.

Drugs Seizures

285. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will report on the amount and value of each type of drug seized by gardaí in the R district in each of the years 2015 and 2016, and to date in 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50628/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I have requested a report from the Garda authorities in relation to the Deputy's question and I will provide the information requested when that report is to hand.

Garda Remuneration

286. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if the Attorney General has reported back to him with advice regarding the status of the living allowance for trainee gardaí in Templemore College; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50640/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I can confirm to the Deputy that the advices concerned have been received from the Attorney General's Office and are to the effect that the money paid in respect of the 'living allowance' out of the Garda Vote into

an account in the College was public money. Accordingly, the rules of accounting for the use of that public money received from the Central Fund were applicable. This has no implications for the findings of the Internal Audit Report.

The Deputy may wish to note that the funding model for the College changed in May 2017 and the restaurant is now being run on a net cost basis. I am advised by the Garda Commissioner that the monthly funding from the Garda Vote for the restaurant is now calculated from the cost of staff wages and restaurant supplies, and takes account of till receipts. This model is designed to avoid any accumulation of surpluses in the restaurant account.

In line with the recommendation in the Interim Internal Audit Report and in order to give a transparent picture of the total costs and income of the College, from 2018 all College expenditure hitherto paid from the restaurant account (based on the living allowance direct payments) will now be paid from the Vote under a new College specific subhead and a new budget line for College income from the restaurant, etc. will be included within Appropriations-in-Aid. This together with the other steps being taken by An Garda Síochána to implement the recommendations of the Report as a matter of priority will ensure that the serious shortcoming identified in the Report cannot arise again.

I am pleased to say that there has been very substantial progress in relation to the implementation of the recommendations as noted by the Policing Authority in its second report on this matter. The Authority's report was laid before the Houses on 17 November 2017.

Garda Operations

287. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Question No. 28 of 12 July 2017, the position regarding the promised liaison between his Department, gardaí and other relevant stakeholders to address the issue of nuisance quad bike and scrambler use; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50646/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will be aware, I have written to the relevant parties, including the Ministers for Transport, Tourism and Sport and Housing, Planning and Local Government, the Garda Commissioner, the Chairman of the Revenue Commissioners and the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, in order to ascertain whether there are additional legislative or other solutions which can assist us in dealing with this issue more comprehensively, by way of a joined-up approach.

Responses have now been received from the majority of bodies. I intend to convene a meeting of all of the interested parties in order to identify additional effective solutions and assign responsibility and timeframes for implementation, as soon as all outstanding responses have been received.

Migrant Integration

288. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Question No. 136 of 22 November 2017, the names of the ten local authorities which have a migrant integration policy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50651/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton): I would draw the Deputy's attention to my response to question number 136 of 22 November 2017. I have no responsibility in relation to the actions of local authorities. However, in order

to be of assistance to the Deputy, I have sought the relevant information from the Local Government Management Agency. The names of the ten local authorities which have published a migrant integration policy are as follows:

Carlow County Council

Dublin City Council

Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council

Galway County Council

Kerry County Council

Kildare County Council

Kilkenny County Council

Limerick City and County Council

Longford County Council

South Dublin County Council.

Development of Local Authorities' integration strategies will be undertaken within the framework of the National Strategy. Action 52 of the Migrant Integration Strategy - A Blueprint for the future, which was published on 7 February 2017, provides for the updating of integration strategies by local authorities over the lifetime of the Strategy i.e. from 2017 to 2020.

A Monitoring and Co-ordination Committee has been established to support the process of implementing the Migrant Integration Strategy. The Committee, which comprises representatives of relevant Government Departments, State Agencies and the NGO sector, met for the second time in October 2017 and is due to meet again in January 2018. Progress on the implementation of the actions in the Strategy will be reviewed at the end of 2018 and a report prepared for Government.

Garda Operations

289. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if further consideration will be given to the request of the local community to have a policing service restored (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50659/17]

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, including the opening and closing of Garda stations. As Minister, I have no role in the matter.

As the Deputy will be aware, the Programme for a Partnership Government commits to 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. The Garda Commissioner has recently submitted his final report in relation to the pilot and the report contains a recommendation that Bawnboy Garda station be one of the six Garda stations to be included in the pilot.

Foireann Roinne

290. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Dlí agus Cirt agus Comhionannais cén líon iomlán foirne atá fostaithe ina Roinn faoi láthair; cé mhéid post atá daingnithe nó aitheanta ag an Roinn (i scéim teanga, nó ar aon bhealach eile) mar phoist a bhfuil riachtanas Gaeilge ag baint leo; cé mhéid duine atá ann ag a bhfuil líofacht i nGaeilge agus atá ag feidhmiú sna poist sin atá daingnithe nó aitheanta mar phoist a bhfuil riachtanas Gaeilge ag baint leo; an bhfuil sé beartaithe ag an tráth seo aon phost eile de chuid na Roinne a aithint mar phoist a bhfuil riachtanas Gaeilge. [50686/17]

291. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Dlí agus Cirt agus Comhionannais cé mhéid folúntas a líonadh ina Roinn ó thús na bliana seo; cé mhéid de na folúntais sin a bhain le poist a bhí sainaitheanta mar phoist a raibh Gaeilge riachtanach ina leith; cé mhéid folúntas atá le líonadh faoi láthair agus cé mhéid de na folúntais siúd atá sainaitheanta mar fholúntais a bhfuil riachtanas Gaeilge ag baint leo. [50703/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 290 and 291 together.

Is é líon na bhfolúntas a líonadh i mo Roinn ó thosach na bliana ná 549 bhfolúntas. Cuirtear sa líon sin fruilithe nua, arduithe céime agus aistrithe isteach sa Roinn. Ina theannta sin, tá amach is isteach le 55 fholúntas sa Roinn atá le líonadh fós. Ní dhearnadh aon cheann de na folúntais a shainaitheant mar fholúntais a raibh riachtanas Gaeilge ag baint leo. Déanann an t-aonad Acmhainní Daonna i mo Roinn an próiseas pleanála fórsa oibre a bhainistiú, lena sainaitheantar riachtanais foirnithe sa todhchaí. Faoi láthair, níl aon phleananna ann aon phoist bhreise a aithint a bhfuil riachtanas Gaeilge ag baint leo.

Ag an tráth seo, tá 2,318 ball foirne fostaithe i mo Roinn. Tá post amháin ag an Roinn, post Aistritheora, a bhfuil sé riachtanach go mbeadh an sealbhóir dátheangach go feidhmiúil sa Ghaeilge agus sa Bhéarla. Is é príomhról an Aistritheora Rialacha Cúirte a aistriú go Gaeilge. Ina theannta sin, tá cohórt de 39 oifigeach sa Roinn atá ar fáil chun seirbhísí a sholáthar (i.e. ceisteanna agus fiosruithe a fhreagairt) i nGaeilge.

Housing Policy

292. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if there are grants for housing relocation for persons from Gaeltacht areas living away and returning home to build a family home. [49854/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Joe McHugh): The scheme of housing grants which was administered by the Department in accordance with the Housing (Gaeltacht) Acts was suspended with effect from 7 April 2009. There are no plans to restore this scheme at present.

Vacancies on State Boards

293. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the number of vacancies in each State board under the aegis of her Department, in tabular form. [49932/17]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The

current vacancies on the Boards of bodies under the aegis of my Department are set out in the table.

The Public Appointments Service (PAS) operates a dedicated website, www.stateboards.ie, through which it advertises vacancies on State Boards. Arrangements are currently in train in co-operation with PAS to fill vacancies on the Board of Údarás na Gaeltachta.

It should be noted that in the case of Foras na Gaeilge, Board appointments are made by the North/South Ministerial Council following nomination on a 50:50 basis from each jurisdiction. The current Foras na Gaeilge vacancies require nomination by the Northern Executive for subsequent North South Ministerial Council approval.

It should further be noted that the current vacancy on the Board of the National Museum of Ireland is for a staff nominee.

State Board	Number of Current Vacancies
Arts Council	2
Crawford Art Gallery	1
Foras na Gaeilge (An Foras Teanga)	3
Heritage Council	1
Irish Museum of Modern Art	1
National Museum of Ireland	1
Údarás na Gaeltachta	11

Appointments to State Boards Data

294. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the names of persons she has appointed to each State board under the aegis of her Department that have not come from the Public Appointments Service list of suitable candidates, in tabular form. [49994/17]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The Public Appointments Service (PAS) operates a dedicated website, www.stateboards.ie, through which it advertises vacancies on State Boards. Since this service commenced in 2014, with the exception of certain statutorily defined appointments, all of the appointments I have made to the Boards of bodies under my remit have been from shortlists of suitable candidates provided by PAS following calls for expressions of interest from members of the public. Appointments which must, under governing legislation for the Board in question, be made via a different process are: ex officio appointments; appointments following nominations from particular bodies; and appointments to North/South bodies. Appointments to the boards of Foras na Gaeilge and the Ulster-Scots Agency, being agencies of the North/South Implementation Body, An Foras Teanga, are made by the North/South Ministerial Council, arising from nominations on a 50:50 basis.

The table below gives details of all appointments, since PAS first began to provide shortlists in 2014, that have not come from the PAS process.

Questions - Written Answers

Board	Name of appointee	Date of appointment	Appointment type
Crawford Gallery of Art	Susan McCarty (Cllr)	06/01/2016	Cork County Council Nominee
	Tim Brosnan (Cllr)	03/02/2016	Cork City Council Nominee
	Mary Hegarty (Cllr)	06/01/2016	Cork Education & Training Board Nominee
Foras na Gaeilge	Gráinne McElwain	13/12/2015	North/South Ministerial Council
	Blathnaid Ní Chofaigh	13/12/2015	
	Seán Ó hArgáin	13/12/2015	
	Seán Ó Coisdealbha	13/12/2015	
	Seán Micheál Ó Dómhnaill	13/12/2015	
	Conor McGuinness	24/06/2016	
	Rosie Ní Laoghaire*	24/06/2016	
	Barra Ó Muiri	07/07/2016	
	Máire Ní Neachtain	13/12/2016	
	Mairéad Connolly	13/12/2016	
	Mairéad Farrell	13/12/2016	
	Niall Ó Gallochobair	13/12/2016	
	Sorcha Ní Chéidigh	13/12/2016	
	Pól Ó Gallchóir	13/12/2016	
Irish Manuscripts Commission	John McDonough	25/02/2015	Ex-Officio
	Sandra Collins	31/07/2015	Ex-Officio
	Michael Willis	18/11/2016	Ex-Officio

Board	Name of appointee	Date of appointment	Appointment type
National Gallery of Ireland	Mick O'Dea	14/10/2014	Ex-Officio
	Stephen McKenna*	21/10/2015	RHA Nominee
	Vivienne Roche	21/10/2015	RHA Nominee
	James English	05/05/2017	RHA Nominee
	Owen Lewis	01/12/2016	Ex-Officio
	Maurice Buckley	12/12/2016	Ex-Officio
	Peter Kennedy	16/03/2017	Ex-Officio
	Bernie Brennan	06/12/2013	Ex-Officio
National Library of Ireland	Eoin McVey	11/11/2015	RDS Nominee
	Katherine McSharry	19/11/2015	NLI Staff Nominee
National Museum of Ireland	Ingrid Hook	06/07/2016	RDS Nominee
	Kathleen James-Chakraborty	06/07/2016	RIA Nominee
	Mary O'Dowd	06/07/2016	RIA Nominee
	Karen Wilson*	06/07/2016	NMI Staff Nominee
Údarás na Gaeilge	Aindrias Ó Muineacháin	10/02/2015	Cork County Council Nominee
	Gobnait Ní Mhuineacháin	31/05/2016	Cork County Council Nominee
	Máire Seosaimhin Breathnach	15/02/2017	Waterford County Council Nominee
Ulster Scots Agency	Allen McAdam	13/12/2015	North/South Ministerial Council
	Freddie Kettle	13/12/2015	
	Val O'Kelly	13/12/2015	
	Ida Fisher	13/12/2015	
	David McNarry	13/12/2016	
	Julie Andrews	13/12/2016	
	Iain Carlisle	13/12/2016	
	Keith Gamble	13/12/2016	

*No longer sitting board members

Brexit Documents

295. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if she has used a private email account to send or receive official documents or positions on Brexit; and if so, the details of this correspondence. [50055/17]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): As I advised the House in my reply to Parliamentary Question No. 225 of 2nd February last, official email business in my role as Minister is conducted via Department and Oireachtas email accounts. On occasion, when outside the office, I make use of a private email account on my mobile phone to forward information of a non-sensitive nature to my private office, generally relating to diary appointments or constituency matters. This private email account has not been used to send or receive any communications regarding official documentation or positions on Brexit.

Departmental Bodies Data

296. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the bodies under the aegis of her Department to which her Department provides in excess of €1 million funding per annum; the public funding received by these bodies; the bodies in which 50% or more of its income comes from public sources; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50111/17]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Details of funding allocations to those bodies under the aegis of my Department are available on my Department's website and in the Revised Estimates Volume published by the Department of Public Expenditure. Aggregate allocations are published in respect of the following four bodies - the National Concert Hall, the Irish Museum of Modern Art, the Chester Beatty Library

and the Crawford Gallery, each of which is receipt of allocations in excess of €1m. Details of income and expenditure by each of these bodies is available in the published annual report and accounts of the bodies.

Wildlife Protection

297. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the assistance her Department can provide for the development of a wildlife rehabilitation hospital and visitor centre in Fingal in view of the fact that such rescue centres are in operation throughout the UK. [50180/17]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): My Department is responsible for the implementation of the Wildlife Acts and the EU Birds and Habitats Directives. This legislative framework provides for the conservation of the populations of a wide range of species. In this regard, various measures are in place to conserve and, where appropriate, restore populations of threatened species. However, the core work of my Department does not include the rehabilitation of individual animals and I am not in a position to provide funding for a hospital or visitor facility.

Responsibility for the Animal Health and Welfare Act rests with my colleague, the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

Departmental Funding

298. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the amount of grant funding that was made available to a company (details supplied); when this was provided; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50226/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Joe McHugh): The information requested in respect of the Company referred to by the Deputy is detailed in the table.

Grant Type	Date Approved	Amount Approved	Amount Paid (to date)	Payment date(s)
Employment Grant	04/03/2016	€614,000.00	€32,256 €20,000	02/02/2017 02/03/2017
Employment grant (managers)	04/03/2016	€60,000.00	€19,636 €34,070 €7,500 €21,380	22/03/2017 16/06/2017 06/11/2017 07/11/2017
Training Grant	04/03/2016	€100,000.00	€9,804 €7,157 €888 €6,000	23/02/2017 22/03/2017 16/06/2017 06/11/2017
Rent Subsidy	04/03/2016	€68,000.00	€4,252 €4,252 €4,252	01/04/2017 01/07/2017 01/10/2017
Total:		€842,000.00	€171,447	

Commemorative Events

299. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the location of the international dimension of the national famine commemoration in 2017; the proposed location for the international dimension of the same commemoration in 2018; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50263/17]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The

International Famine Commemoration 2017 took place in Ireland Park, Toronto on Tuesday 24th October last. As I was unable to travel Minister of State Patrick O'Donovan T.D., represented the Government on my behalf.

Details of the 2018 International Famine Commemoration are currently being considered and will be announced in due course.

Departmental Contracts Data

300. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the public contracts between her Department and companies (details supplied) in each of the years 2011 to 2016; the value of each contract; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50397/17]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): I am advised that a payment was made for €41,795 to the first company referred to by the Deputy in 2014 to conduct a review of the Aran Islands Air Service. The report in question was published that year. In 2012, payments of €1,600 were made to the second company referred to by the Deputy. No payments were made to the third company referred to by the Deputy during period in question.

Legal Advice

301. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the advice that she received from the Attorney General regarding the Heritage Bill 2016. [50513/17]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Advice provided by the Attorney General to me as Minister is subject to legal professional privilege.

Foireann Roinne

302. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Cultúir, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta cén líon iomlán foirne atá fostaithe ina Roinn faoi láthair nach bhfuil lonnaithe sa Ghaeltacht; cé mhéid de na poist sin (lasmuigh den Ghaeltacht) atá daingnithe nó aitheanta ag an Roinn (i scéim teanga, nó ar aon bhealach eile) mar phoist a bhfuil riachtanas Gaeilge ag baint leo; cé mhéid duine atá ann ag a bhfuil cumas oibre i nGaeilge agus atá ag feidhmiú sna poist ar leith sin (lasmuigh den Ghaeltacht) a bhfuil riachtanas Gaeilge ag baint leo; an bhfuil sé beartaithe ag an tráth seo aon phost eile de chuid na Roinne lasmuigh den Ghaeltacht a aithint mar phost a bhfuil riachtanas Gaeilge ag baint leo [50527/17]

303. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Cultúir, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta cé mhéid folúntas a líonadh in oifigí de chuid na Roinne lasmuigh den Ghaeltacht ó thús na bliana seo; cé mhéid de na folúntais áirithe sin a bhain le poist a bhí sainaitheanta mar phoist a raibh Gaeilge riachtanach ina leith; cé mhéid folúntas atá le líonadh in oifigí de chuid na Roinne lasmuigh den Ghaeltacht faoi láthair agus cé mhéid díobh siúd atá sainaitheanta mar fholúntais a bhfuil riachtanas Gaeilge ag dul leo. [50528/17]

304. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Cultúir, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta cén líon iomlán foirne atá fostaithe in oifigí de chuid na Roinne sa Ghaeltacht faoi láthair; cé

mhéid folúntas a líonadh sna hoifigí sin sa Ghaeltacht ó thús na bliana seo; cé mhéid folúntas atá le líonadh in oifigí de chuid na Roinne sa Ghaeltacht faoi láthair. [50529/17]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): I propose to take Questions Nos. 302 to 304, inclusive, together.

Tá curtha in iúl dom go bhfuil 57 duine ag obair i Rannán Gaeltachta na Roinne, inarb í an Ghaeilge an teanga oibre go fóill. Ó mhí Eanáir na bliana seo, rinneadh deich bpost a líonadh i Rannán na Gaeltachta, agus tá ceann amháin go fóill le líonadh. Chomh maith leis sin, dúradh liom gur líonadh 65 post in oifigí na Roinne taobh amuigh de Rannán na Gaeltachta. Tá ceann amháin de na poist sin, post mar Oifigeach Preasa, sainaitheanta ag an Roinn mar cheann a bhfuil cumas sa Ghaeilge riachtanach dó. D'fhéach an Roinn leis an phost a líonadh tríd an tSeirbhís um Cheapacháin Phoiblí, ach in ainneoin cuardach mion a dhéanamh, ní raibh an tSeirbhís in ann iarrthóir dátheangach a chur ar fáil. Tá an post líonta anois le duine nach cainteoir Gaeilge í, ach tá 3 cainteoirí líofa Gaeilge ag obair sa Phreasoifig agus iad go léir in ann feidhmiú mar Phreasoifigigh Cúnta nuair is gá.

Tá sé ráite liom go bhfuil 612 duine fostaithe faoi láthair sa Roinn taobh amuigh de rannán na Gaeltachta.

Tá na poist seo a leanas (taobh amuigh den Ghaeltacht) ainmnithe i scéim teanga mo Roinne mar phoist a bhfuil cumas Gaeilge riachtanach dóibh

Teideal an Phoist	Láthair
Gach post	Oifig an Aire Stáit
Preasoifigeach & Preasoifigeach Cúnta	Sráid Chill Dara
Treoraí Oideachais	Páirc Náisiúnta Ghleann Bheatha

Tá Gaeilge líofa ag an fhoireann go léir i m'Oifigse agus ag roinnt mhaith den fhoireann i bPáirc Náisiúnta Ghleann Bheatha, an Treoraí Oideachais ina measc.

Is é polasaí mo Roinne úsáid na Gaeilge a chur chun cinn ar bhonn náisiúnta agus í a neartú sa Ghaeltacht agus tá sé mar aidhm againn a chinntiú go bhfuil líon dóthanach de m'fhoireann lánábailta feidhmiú i nGaeilge. Tacaíonn an Roinn le baill foirne ar bhonn leanúnach le feabhas a chur ar a gcuid scileanna Gaeilge ag gach leibhéal cumais. Mar shampla, cuireann an Roinn an Teastas sa Ghaeilge Ghairmiúil chun cinn go gníomhach. Clár páirtaimseartha atá ann a chuireann Gaelchultúr ar fáil chun cuidiú le fostaithe san earnáil phoiblí leibhéal níos airde seirbhíse do chustaiméirí a chur ar fáil i nGaeilge.

Tá mé sásta go bhfuil go leor ball foirne ag na gráid iomchuí le gnó na Roinne a chur i gcrích go héifeachtach i nGaeilge agus i mBéarla araon. Déantar athbhreithniú leanúnach ar na leibhéil soláthair foirne ar fud na Roinne de réir na riachtanas gnó, mar a léirítear i bPlean Fórsa Saothair na Roinne, agus ag féachaint do pholasaí an Rialtais maidir le pá san earnáil phoiblí de réir chomhairle ón Roinn Caiteachais Phoiblí agus Athchóirithe.

Broadcasting Sector

305. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if a reply will issue to concerns raised by a person (details supplied) in relation to the retention of both the RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra and the RTÉ Concert Orchestra as separate entities; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50658/17]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): My colleague the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and the Environment has the statutory remit for broadcasting including RTÉ. My Department has no role in relation to RTÉ.

Hospice Services Provision

306. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Health if the section 39 hospices will receive funding to enable them to refund the cuts that were made following the application of FEMPI; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that the country's hospices are facing a deficit of approximately €4 million which will force them to cut services in 2018 and also pose staff recruitment problems; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50622/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Further to previous Parliamentary Questions and discussion in the Dáil, the Deputy will be aware that any individuals employed by Section 39 organisations are not HSE employees. Therefore, neither the HSE nor my Department has a role in determining the salaries or other terms and conditions applying to these staff.

The Deputy will also be aware that the staff of these Section 39 organisations are not public servants and therefore were not subject to the FEMPI legislation which imposed pay reductions. It follows then that the staff of the Section 39 bodies will not be eligible for any pay restoration associated with the unwinding of this legislation and provided for under the more recent Public Service Agreements. As already outlined, it is a matter for Section 39 organisations to negotiate salaries with their staff as part of their employment relationship and within the overall funding available for the delivery of agreed services.

Whilst it is understood that pay cuts were imposed on Section 39 employees, it is not clear that these cuts were applied in a universally consistent manner across all the Section 39 agencies. It is also important to recognise that this group of organisations within the health sector is just one element of a larger complex issue which could have significant cost implications for the Exchequer across the public services as a whole. In this regard, I have had discussions with my colleague Minister Donohoe and will continue to engage with him on this matter.

Hospital Appointments Status

307. **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. [49857/17]

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 Administration

308. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 670 of 7 November 2017, if an early hospital appointment for a person (details supplied) will be expedited. [49864/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In relation to the specific case raised, I have understand that the HSE have issued a response to you directly.

Dental Services Provision

309. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health if a person (details supplied) will be approved for new dentures under the medical card dental scheme as an exception due to their medical needs and age; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49877/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Home Care Packages Provision

310. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide a report on all care companies providing home care in CH06; the number of persons in receipt of care packages; the number of these that are being fulfilled; the number that are waiting for a carer; the number of times each company has withdrawn its services from a service user in 2016; the reason for same; if he has satisfied himself that there are enough care companies and carer's employed by the HSE to fulfil the need; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49879/17]

311. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Health if he will report on the system of home care either in house, with the HSE or with private companies; the way in which the services are allocated; the way in which a person with a home care package accesses these services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49880/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 310 and 311 together.

As these are service matters I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Medical Aids and Appliances Provision

312. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the reason medicated plasters (details supplied) have been removed from the medical card list of items that can be prescribed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49882/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Medicines play a vital role in improving the health of Irish patients. Securing access to existing and new and innovative medicines is a key objective of the health service. However, the challenge is to do this in an affordable and sustainable manner. The medicines bill for the community drugs schemes – primarily the GMS, Long Term Illness and Drugs Payment schemes and the High Tech Arrangement – is forecast

at just over €1.7 billion in 2017.

To ensure patients receive the highest quality care, resources invested in medicines must be used efficiently and effectively. This requires an integrated approach to secure best value for money for all treatments, greater efficiencies in the supply chain and the use of the most cost-effective treatments.

Lidocaine 5% medicated plaster (Versatis) is licensed for the symptomatic relief of neuropathic pain associated with previous herpes zoster (shingles) infection, known as post-herpetic neuralgia (PHN), in adults. It was reimbursed in the community drugs schemes from 2010. The projected budget impact was low due to the specific licensed indication but total expenditure has increased significantly, from €9.4 million in 2012 to over €30 million in 2016, mainly from off-license use for pain not associated with shingles. Currently, over 25,000 patients receive this item.

An HSE Medicines Management Programme (MMP) review of Versatis highlighted that the clinical evidence for its use in PHN is limited due to lack of comparative data and its value is uncertain for all other types of pain. The National Centre for Pharmacoeconomics estimated that, in Ireland, between 5-10% of prescribing of this product is for the licensed indication of PHN.

Following the MMP review, the HSE introduced a new reimbursement system for Versatis from 1 September 2017. This process supports the appropriate use of Versatis, ensuring that PHN patients continue to receive this treatment. The HSE estimates that this protocol will reduce expenditure on this product by approximately 90%.

Under the protocol, all patients who receive antivirals for shingles are automatically approved for Versatis for three months. No action is required by GPs and the patient's pharmacy is notified of his or her approval status.

All patients who currently use Versatis have been identified and automatically registered on the HSE-PCRS system for three months and will continue to receive the treatment from their pharmacy until 30 November 2017. However, from 1 December 2017, non-shingles patients will no longer get Versatis under the community drugs schemes. The HSE has produced information leaflets for patients and advised GPs on treatment alternatives.

In exceptional circumstances, the product may be approved for supply through the community schemes for unlicensed indications. GPs apply for reimbursement for unlicensed indications through the online system. The MMP reviews applications before a decision is made and communicated to the GP.

Full details of the Versatis review are available on the HSE website at <http://hse.ie/eng/about/Who/clinical/natclinprog/medicinemanagementprogramme/yourmedicines/lidocaine-plaster/lidocaine-medicated-plaster.html>.

This decision is a matter for the HSE. However, I fully support the objectives of the HSE Medicines Management Programme.

Health Products Regulatory Authority

313. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the steps he and the Health Service Executive are taking regarding the issue of children affected by foetal anticonvulsant syndrome in circumstances in which children were exposed to sodium valproate medicines in

the womb; his plans to conduct a review of the families and children affected by this issue; his further plans to set up a compensation scheme for the families affected in view of a compensation scheme set up in France; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49891/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Medicines containing sodium valproate are approved nationally in Ireland, under the brand name Epilim, for the treatment of epilepsy and bipolar disorder. Valproate-containing medicines are authorised for these indications in all EU Member States, and in Norway and Iceland.

It has been well established that children exposed to valproate in the womb have an increased risk of congenital malformations and neurodevelopmental disorders, including autism. The product information for valproate-containing medicines clearly states that such medicines should not be used in female children, in female adolescents, in women of childbearing potential and pregnant women unless alternative treatments are ineffective or not tolerated. A warning label for the outer packaging of Epilim products was introduced in Ireland earlier this year; products carrying the new external warning label are now being supplied to retail pharmacies.

In March of this year, the Pharmacovigilance Risk Assessment Committee (PRAC) of the European Medicines Agency (EMA) initiated a new review of the use of valproate-containing medicines in the treatment of women and girls who are pregnant or of childbearing age. This review is examining the available evidence and consulting with relevant stakeholder groups; the most recent component of the review was a public hearing held at the London offices of the EMA on 26 September. In its summary of the public hearing, the EMA noted that the PRAC would consider a number of proposals and ideas presented by participants, including registers of women who were receiving valproate and children who had been exposed to valproate during pregnancy.

When the EMA's current review of valproate is concluded, the HPRA will communicate the outcome and recommendations of the review to Irish patients, healthcare professionals and relevant stakeholders, including the HSE. The HSE National Clinical Programme for Epilepsy will also consider the outcome of the EMA review in finalising its protocol for the effective management of women with epilepsy.

In terms of supports and services for children with foetal anti-convulsant syndrome, the National Disability Strategy is based on a non-condition-specific approach to the delivery of public services. The current Programme for Partnership Government commits this Government to improving services and increasing supports for all people with disabilities, particularly for early assessment and intervention for children with special needs. This commitment is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities. The overarching principle governing the planning and delivery of health services and supports for adults and children with disabilities is that they should be integrated, as much as possible, with services and supports for the rest of the population.

I am aware that France has a state-funded compensation scheme for medical accidents, and that this scheme is now considering claims from individuals affected by valproate. I am also aware that a patient representative group in France has filed a class action lawsuit against the manufacturer of a valproate-containing medicine. My Department will monitor developments in France and in other member states, and will give appropriate consideration to the findings and recommendations of the current EMA review of valproate when this review is completed.

314. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the number of children and families diagnosed with foetal anticonvulsant syndrome; the wait time for a diagnosis of foetal anticonvulsant syndrome; the number of children on the waiting list for this diagnosis; the measures taken by the HPRA to ensure warnings are displayed on all sodium valproate medicines; his plans for an awareness campaign; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49892/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Deputy's questions regarding diagnosis of foetal anti-convulsant syndrome (FACS) are service matters for the HSE; therefore, these questions have been referred to the agency for attention and reply to the Deputy.

The Health Products Regulatory Authority (HPRA) has implemented a number of measures intended to ensure that all patients and healthcare professionals understand the risks and benefits of medicines containing sodium valproate. These measures include the introduction earlier this year of a warning label for the outer packaging of Epilim (sodium valproate) products; retail pharmacies are now being supplied with products carrying the new external warning label.

The product information supplied with this medicine also includes detailed warnings and recommendations for healthcare professionals and patients regarding the use of valproate, including the need for treatment to be initiated and supervised by a specialist experienced in the management of epilepsy or bipolar disorder. Within the last two weeks, the HPRA has been in contact with the pharmacy regulator, the Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland (PSI), to re-emphasise the importance of informing women of childbearing age of the potential risks of taking valproate-containing medicines. The PSI subsequently issued a circular to all registered pharmacists highlighting the need to include a patient leaflet and Alert Card with each supply of these medicines, and to provide additional labelling and counselling to patients as required.

Since March of this year, the Pharmacovigilance Risk Assessment Committee (PRAC) of the European Medicines Agency has been conducting a new review to examine the use of valproate-containing medicines in the treatment of women and girls who are pregnant or of childbearing age. When the PRAC's review is concluded, the HPRA will communicate the outcome and recommendations of the review to Irish patients, healthcare professionals and relevant stakeholders, including the HSE.

Mental Health Services Provision

315. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the planned schedule for implementation of the mental health helpline; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49893/17]

316. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the services proposed under the planned mental health helpline; the services being considered for referral to the helpline, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49894/17]

317. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the planned opening hours of the new mental health helpline; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49895/17]

318. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the proposed staffing and the expected qualifications of those in place to operate the mental health helpline [49896/17]

320. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the expected volume of calls and the methodology of the expected estimated calls to the new mental health helpline; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49898/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 315 to 318, inclusive, and 320 together.

Minister of State for Mental Health and Older People, Jim Daly T.D., has set as a priority the development of a Mental Health Telephone/Text Helpline. Preliminary discussions regarding the feasibility of establishing a Helpline, and the related parameters and resource issues around that, were held on the 7 November. The HSE has agreed to lead this project out, and it has established a working group to perform the necessary scoping work. This group will report back in due course after a full assessment has been made of the infrastructure requirements for successful implementation. Development of the Helpline is still in its early stages and therefore no schedule or deliverable milestones have been finalised at this time. The Minister and Department officials will meet with the HSE again in early 2018 for an update on progress. The date of this meeting is yet to be confirmed.

Mental Health Services Provision

319. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health if the voluntary sector will be engaged in the new mental health helpline; the discussions which have taken place to date; his plans for future discussions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49897/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): I have set as a priority the development of a Mental Health Telephone/Text Helpline. Preliminary discussions regarding the feasibility of establishing a Helpline, and the related parameters and resource issues around that, were held on the 7 November. The HSE has agreed to lead this project out, and it has established a working group to perform the necessary scoping work. This group will report back in due course after a full assessment has been made of the infrastructure requirements for successful implementation. Development of the Helpline is still in its early stages and therefore no schedule or deliverable milestones have been finalised at this time. The Minister and Department officials will meet with the HSE again in early 2018 for an update on progress. The date of this meeting is yet to be confirmed.

Question No. 320 answered with Question No. 315.

Neuro-Rehabilitation Services Data

321. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons that have been sent to the UK for specialist neuro rehabilitation due to a lack of services here since the neuro rehabilitation strategy was published in 2011; the overall cost to the State; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49902/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): The Health Service Executive (HSE) Social Care Division and the HSE Clinical Programme and Strategy Division are working in tandem to progress the implementation of the *National Policy & Strategy for the provision of Neuro-rehabilitation Services in Ireland*. This is in line with the commitment to publish an implementation plan as outlined in the *Programme for a Partnership Government* and the commitment in the HSE National Service Plan 2017 and HSE Social Care Operational Plan for 2017.

As your query relates to service matters it has been forwarded to the HSE for direct reply.

Community Care

322. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health the details of the latest proposals being recommended in respect of the redevelopment of a facility (details supplied) in County Donegal; the changes being considered for long-term residential care and dementia services at the aforementioned facility as part of these plans; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49905/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): While the care delivered to residents in our community hospitals is generally of a very high standard, many of these services are delivered in buildings that are less than ideal in the modern context. It is important therefore that we upgrade our public bed stock and this is the aim of the 5 year Capital Investment Programme for Community Nursing Units which was announced last year. This provides the framework to allow for an enhanced programme to replace, upgrade and refurbish these care facilities, as appropriate. Significant work was undertaken to determine the most optimum scheduling of projects within the phased provision of funding to achieve compliance with National Standards.

This investment programme will see the provision of two new centres in Donegal, namely in Ballyshannon and also a 130 bed centre, centrally located in Letterkenny.

Since the announcement in 2016, and following discussions with public representatives, Health Forum members and local community groups, local HSE management in CHO 1 agreed to review overall requirements for the area. The Terms of Reference for the Rhatigan's review were as follows:

I understand that the review has been completed and a report is to be submitted to the HSE's National Social Care Division in the first instance, and then the HSE's National Capital Property Steering Group.

Any proposals for changes to the approved Capital Investment Programme for Community Nursing Units would have to be considered in the context of capital funding available to Health, potential revenue implications and compliance with the agreed capital approval process.

Medicinal Products Reimbursement

323. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the outcome of the meeting between a company (details supplied) and the HSE in recent days regarding the drug Vimizim for the treatment of Morquio disease; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49906/17]

398. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Health if the HSE drugs committee group met on 14 September 2017; if the drug Vimizim was discussed; if a decision was made to reimburse the drug; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50276/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 323 and 398 together.

Under the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013, the HSE has statutory responsibility for the pricing and reimbursement of the community drug schemes; therefore, the matter has been referred to the HSE for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

Health Services Funding

324. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the way in which rates paid by the HSE to private addiction clinics are decided upon; the details of the decision process; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49907/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne): As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

Medicinal Products Reimbursement

325. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the outcome of the meeting between the HSE and a company (details supplied) in relation to Respreeza; the ongoing difficulties which has seen deterioration in the health of persons with alpha-1; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49908/17]

326. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health if measures have now been put in place to allow persons with alpha-1 to receive Respreeza; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49909/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 325 and 326 together.

The HSE has statutory responsibility for decisions on pricing and reimbursement of medicines under the community drugs schemes, in accordance with the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013. The Act does not give the Minister for Health any powers in this regard.

I am aware that a number of patients were on an access scheme operated by the manufacturer of this drug and that the company had stated that the scheme would end on 30 September 2017.

I therefore sought assurances from the HSE that appropriate care arrangements would be put in place for patients and that appropriate ethical guidelines have been and will continue to be followed for all aspects of the programme.

Subsequent to this, the company let patients know that it would continue supply of the drug for six months but since then an issue has arisen with regard to its administration. This represents a departure from arrangements, which the company had operated for a considerable period of time, in respect of a scheme that was run independently and without reference to the HSE.

I am aware that the HSE met the company last week to discuss the continued operation of access arrangements for the group of patients concerned and I have asked the HSE to keep me informed of developments.

National Children's Hospital

327. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health if the application by the Children's hospital group for paediatric interventional radiology service to be developed in existing hospitals prior to the move to the new children's hospital has been successful through the 2018 estimates; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49910/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The health services to be delivered in 2018 have been the subject of detailed discussions between the HSE and my Department as part of the annual National Service Plan process and will be set out in the 2018 National Service Plan currently being prepared by the HSE.

Health Services Staff Recruitment

328. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Health when a permanent child psychologist post will be filled for County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49911/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Health Services Staff Recruitment

329. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Health when the nursing post to cover maternity leave will be filled at a respite home (details supplied); the capacity at the centre; if it is open to full-time service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49912/17]

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 part of the Nursing Recruitment and Retention Agreement concluded with the INMO and SIPTU Nursing earlier this year, HSE management have committed to cover maternity leave in accordance with the funded workforce plan.

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.

Occupational Therapy Staff

330. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Health when a number of HSE occupational therapist posts in County Donegal will be filled in view of the fact that there is only one occupational therapist for the area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49913/17]

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.

Dental Services

331. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health his plans to review the terms of

the medical card dental scheme in order that older persons over 70 years of age can be allowed discretion to have dentures provided every two years rather than the current mandatory five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49914/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Hospital Admissions

332. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Health the procedures for both voluntary and involuntary admission to a psychiatric hospital including those with a dual diagnosis of alcoholism and a psychiatric illness; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49922/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Mental Health Act 2001 provides the legislative framework within which people who require admission on a voluntary or involuntary basis can be cared for and treated in approved centres, as defined under the Act.

Most people, however, who go to an approved centre for treatment of a mental illness do so by choice and admit themselves as a voluntary patient. For a person to be admitted as an involuntary patient, there is a three-stage process involving an initial application, a recommendation from a General Practitioner and an assessment by a Consultant Psychiatrist that the person under examination suffers from a mental disorder and meets the conditions for involuntary admission as set out in Section 3 of the Act. Such admissions are subject to review by a Mental Health Tribunal.

It is important to point out that any assessment of whether a person should be admitted as an involuntary patient because he/she is deemed to be suffering from a mental disorder, will take into account the question of whether there is a serious likelihood of the person concerned causing immediate and serious harm to himself or herself or to other persons.

It should also be mentioned that Section 8(2) of the Act specifically prohibits the detention under the Act of individuals who suffer from a personality disorder, are socially deviant, or are addicted to drugs or intoxicants. However, where individuals with such conditions are also diagnosed with a mental disorder, then they may be subject to detention but only because of the presence of a mental disorder.

In relation to Dual Diagnosis, the HSE's Mental Health Division recognised the need for a Clinical Programme for Dual Diagnosis to respond to people with substance misuse, both alcohol and/or drugs, together with mental illness. The HSE's Primary Care Division has already appointed a National Clinical Lead for the Addiction Services to improve its response to drug and alcohol abuse at primary care level and this Clinical Lead will work with the Mental Health Clinical Lead to develop a cohesive programme for those with a dual diagnosis.

The aims of this Programme are to develop a standardised evidence-based approach to the identification, assessment and treatment of comorbid mental illness and substance misuse. An integral part of the Dual Diagnosis Programme will be to devise a model of care that will outline how all adolescents and adults suspected of having a moderate to severe mental illness coexisting with significant substance misuse have access to a timely mental health services nationally. This is to be delivered on a CHO basis. The aim will be for the service to be provided in an integrated manner across the HSE's Primary Care Division and the Mental Health Service and will ensure that there are close working relationships with the relevant specialities in the Acute Hospital Groups which will deal with any medical comorbidities that may occur, particularly in

those with alcohol misuse.

A National Working Group, made up of key stakeholders with clinical, service user and service provider expertise, has been appointed. The Group had its first meeting in mid October 2017 and has initiated a work plan to develop a Model of Care based on a Programmatic approach to service improvement and development.

Vacancies on State Boards

333. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Health the number of vacancies in each State board under the aegis of his Department, in tabular form. [49938/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The basis for the nomination of members to the boards of bodies under the aegis of my Department is usually set out in legislation. In line with Government Decision S180/20/10/1617 of 2014 and Guidelines set out by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform relating to the advertising for expressions of interest in vacancies on State Boards, my Department in conjunction with the Public Appointments Service (PAS) currently advertises for board vacancies as they arise, where I, as Minister for Health, have nominating rights under relevant legislation. I also appoint members on the nomination of various bodies, again in accordance with the relevant legislation.

The table sets out the information requested by the Deputy.

State Board	Vacancies at 24 November 2017
Beaumont Hospital Board	1
Consultative Council on Hepatitis C	2
Dietitians Registration Board	1
Health and Social Care Professionals Council	4
Health Information and Quality Authority	2
Irish Blood Transfusion Service	1
Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland	1
Occupational Therapists Registration Board	2
Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland	1
Physiotherapists Registration Board	5
Radiographers Registration Board	1
Speech and Language Therapists Registration Board	3
St. James's Hospital Board	1
Total	25

Hospital Facilities

334. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Health the process of tendering for the shop in Our Lady's Children's Hospital, Crumlin ; and when it went out for tender and so on (details supplied). [49950/17]

335. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Health the reason the shop in Our Lady's

Children's Hospital, Crumlin, is no longer under the management of the hospital; if the internal audit section or the board made the decision; and if so, if he will provide this Deputy with the minutes of the internal audit section in which that decision was made and the minutes of the hospital board meetings since January 2017. [49951/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 334 and 335 together.

As this is a service matter, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond to you directly.

Services for People with Disabilities

336. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the length of time a person (details supplied) in County Cork has been on the waiting list for an assessment of need; when they will have an assessment of need; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49979/17]

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 an individual case, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

Medical Aids and Appliances Provision

337. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health if he will ensure specialist shoes are supplied to a person (details supplied) as a matter of urgency; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49980/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Services for People with Disabilities

338. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Health the reason a person (details supplied) has yet to receive a care plan since August 2016 under the local early years intervention team. [49957/17]

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 an individual case, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

Hospital Appointments Status

339. **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. [49958/17]

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.

Community Care

340. **Deputy Michael Harty** asked the Minister for Health the reason the pilot scheme later known as COSMETS continued for ophthalmologists at four sites and, later, at six sites in view of the fact that it was to be rolled out to all ophthalmologists or ceased after nine months due to a lack of funds in 2004; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49959/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Cross-Border Health Initiatives

341. **Deputy Michael Harty** asked the Minister for Health if the funding for the cross-border healthcare directive comes from the HSE budget; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49960/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As the HSE has responsibility for the operation of the Cross Border Directive, I have asked the HSE to reply directly to the Deputy on this matter.

Hospital Facilities

342. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Health the date the new theatre will be open for surgery in Merlin Park hospital in view of the fact that follow-up meetings in respect of it did not occur; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49965/17]

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 Facilities

343. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Health the alternative arrangements that have been put in place in hospitals in County Galway in view of the fact that the operating theatres in Merlin Park hospital are closed; if the same number of persons are being catered for now; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49966/17]

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

344. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Health if an angiogram can be facilitated for a person (details supplied) who is on a long-term waiting list for same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49969/17]

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.

In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

Appointments to State Boards Data

345. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Health the names of persons he has appointed to each State board under the aegis of his Department who have not come from the Public Appointments Service list of suitable candidates, in tabular form. [50000/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The basis for the nomination of members to the boards of bodies under the aegis of my Department is usually set out in legislation. In line with Government Decision S180/20/10/1617 of 2014 and Guidelines set out by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform relating to the advertising for expressions of interest in vacancies on State Boards, my Department in conjunction with the Public Appointments Service (PAS) currently advertises for board vacancies as they arise, where I, as Minister for Health, have nominating rights under relevant legislation. I also appoint members on the nomination of various bodies, again in accordance with the relevant legislation.

The table below sets out the appointments I have made to statutory boards, as Minister for Health, that have not come from the PAS process.

Board Name	New Appointees	Appointed Date	Basis for Appointment/ Nominated By
Pre-Hospital Emergency Care Council	Dr Conor Deasy	30/06/2016	Health Service Executive
Pre-Hospital Emergency Care Council	Ms Tess O'Donovan	30/06/2016	Health Service Executive

Board Name	New Appointees	Appointed Date	Basis for Appointment/ Nominated By
Social Workers Registration Board	Ms Roberta Mulligan	09/08/2016	Election
Social Workers Registration Board	Ms Colette McLoughlin	09/08/2016	Election
Dublin Dental Hospital Board	Professor Derek Sullivan	09/08/2016	Trinity College, Dublin
Occupational Therapists Registration Board	Professor Catherine McCabe	24/08/2016	Minister for Education and Skills
Speech and Language Therapists Registration Board	Dr Judith Pettigrew	24/08/2016	Minister for Education and Skills
Radiographers Registration Board	Dr Cliona McGovern	24/08/2016	Minister for Education and Skills
Social Workers Registration Board	Dr Perry Share	24/08/2016	Minister for Education and Skills
Beaumont Hospital Board	Professor Conor Murphy	30/09/2016	Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland
National Haemophilia Council	Dr David Vaughan	25/10/2016	Health Service Executive
Health and Social Care Professionals Council	Mr Cormac Quinlan	25/10/2016	Social Workers Registration Board
Medical Scientists Registration Board	Dr Mary Hunt	09/11/2016	Minister for Education and Skills
Dietitians Registration Board	Dr Suzanne Doyle	12/12/2016	Election
Consultative Council on Hepatitis C	Ms Deborah Greene	21/12/2016	Irish Haemophilia Society
Consultative Council on Hepatitis C	Mr Jack McDowell	21/12/2016	Transfusion Positive
Dietitians Registration Board	Professor Mary Ann Therese Flynn	14/02/2017	Election
Beaumont Hospital Board	Professor Kate Irving	17/02/2017	Dublin City University
Beaumont Hospital Board	Dr Tom Houlihan	17/02/2017	Irish College of General Practitioners
Consultative Council on Hepatitis C	Ms Laura O'Brien	17/02/2017	Transfusion Positive
Consultative Council on Hepatitis C	Mr Enda Hannon	17/02/2017	Transfusion Positive
Mental Health Commission	Mr Aaron Galbraith	05/04/2017	Children's Rights Alliance
Mental Health Commission	Dr Jim Lucey	05/04/2017	College of Psychiatrists in Ireland

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Board Name	New Appointees	Appointed Date	Basis for Appointment/ Nominated By
Mental Health Commission	Mr Patrick Lynch	05/04/2017	Health Service Executive
Mental Health Commission	Ms Nicola Byrne	05/04/2017	Irish Association of Social Workers
Mental Health Commission	Dr Margo Wrigley	05/04/2017	Irish Hospital Consultants Association
Mental Health Commission	Ms Catherine O'Rourke	05/04/2017	Mental Health Nurse Managers of Ireland
Mental Health Commission	Dr Michael Drumm	05/04/2017	Psychological Society of Ireland
Beaumont Hospital Board	Councillor Adrian Henchy	09/04/2017	Fingal Co. Co.
Health and Social Care Professionals Council	Mr James Forbes	27/04/2017	Social Care Workers Registration Board
Medical Council	Ms Vicki Blomfield	04/05/2017	Health Information and Quality Authority
Occupational Therapists Registration Board	Mr Jagdish Prasad Yadav	17/05/2017	Election
Occupational Therapists Registration Board	Mr Gerard Walshe	17/05/2017	Election
Health and Social Care Professionals Council	Ms Ruth Charles	30/05/2017	Dietitians Registration Board
National Cancer Registry Board	Dr Jerome Coffey	31/05/2017	Minister for Health
Irish Blood Transfusion Service	Dr Satu Pastilla	07/06/2017	International expert from Finnish Red Cross Blood Centre nominated by Irish Blood Transfusion Service
Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland Council	Ms Marie Louisa Power	21/06/2017	Election
Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland Council	Mr Seán Reilly	21/06/2017	Election
Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland Council	Ms Veronica Treacy	21/06/2017	Election
Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland Council	Mr Michael Lyons	21/06/2017	Election

Board Name	New Appointees	Appointed Date	Basis for Appointment/ Nominated By
Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland	Prof Tanya King	29/06/2017	Health Service Executive
Pre-Hospital Emergency Care Council	Mr Jimmy Jordan	29/06/2017	SIPTU
Health and Social Care Professionals Council	Mr Gerard Walshe	05/07/2017	Occupational Therapists Registration Board
Psychologists Registration Board	Dr Eimear Spain	12/09/2017	Minister for Education and Skills
Medical Council	Ms Catherine McKenna	03/10/2017	Health and Social Care Professionals Council

Health Services Provision

346. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health if he will ensure suitable treatment is put in place for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50012/17]

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.

In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

Drug Rehabilitation Clinics

347. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Health the rationale for closing the Cabra drug treatment clinic at Broombridge Close; the clinical management plan for the patients during this period; the date on which the clinic will reopen; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50017/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne): As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

Health Services Reports

348. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Health the status of a report on trauma care; his plans for a reconfiguration of such services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50021/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Traumatic injuries may be low, moderate or

severe. Major trauma involves injuries which have the potential to cause prolonged disability or death. Based on available data, it is estimated that Ireland has approximately 1,600 major trauma patients each year. Trauma care is a subset of overall Emergency Department activity. Emergency Departments provide 24/7 access for emergency and urgent presentations across the spectrum of medical and surgical conditions with 1,157,074 new Emergency Department attendances in 2016.

In 2015, my predecessor established a Trauma Policy Steering Group, chaired by Professor Eilis McGovern, to make recommendations in relation to the development of a trauma system for Ireland. Patients who have used trauma services and clinicians were at the heart of the development of the plan. The Group has now completed its report and I intend to bring it to Cabinet before the end of the year.

This is about delivering best outcomes for the small number of patients each year who suffer major trauma, that is, injuries which have the potential to cause prolonged disability or death, and ensuring they get the right care in the right place at the right time.

Hospital Services

349. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Health his plans to reduce the levels of services to be provided at a hospital (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50022/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Emergency Department in Cavan has been performing well this year. Performance information from the HSE show a 48% reduction in trolley numbers at the Hospital in comparison with the same period in 2016.

In addition all Hospital Groups and Community Health Organisations have developed and put in place integrated winter preparedness plans for their locality focussed on planning and escalation preparedness, maintaining patient flow processes and ensuring public health preparedness.

Future investment in Cavan General Hospital will be considered within the overall acute hospital infrastructure programme, the prioritised needs of the hospital groups and in the most cost effective way possible to meet current and future needs of the health service.

There are no plans to reduce the level of service at Cavan General Hospital.

Hospital Services

350. **Deputy Michael Harty** asked the Minister for Health his views on whether services at University Hospital Limerick can survive a winter flu epidemic in view of the chronic state of the emergency department, the cancellation of elective procedures, the CPE threat and the unacceptable hospital work overload; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50028/17]

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

Cancer Services Provision

351. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health his plans to ensure the initially agreed treatment is provided for a person (details supplied) undergoing breast cancer treatment at Midland Regional Hospital, Tullamore; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50037/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond to you directly.

Health Care Policy

352. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding Irish citizens accessing health care in Northern Ireland, including for minor and major procedures; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50038/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Irish Patients can seek to access health care in an other EU/EEA member state via three different schemes.

Where a service is provided in Ireland but a patient wishes to access care in another EU/EEA Member State, this can be possible by seeking treatment under the Directive on Patients' Rights in Cross Border Healthcare, otherwise known as the Cross Border Directive (CBD).

The CBD provides rules for the reimbursements to patients of the cost of receiving treatment abroad, where the patient would be entitled to such treatment in their home Member State, and supplements the rights that patients already have at EU level. Patients may access the healthcare they require in either the public or private healthcare system of another Member State under the CBD. Access to healthcare abroad is based on patients following public patient pathways, i.e. they must demonstrate they have followed the equivalent public patient pathways that a patient would follow if accessing public healthcare in Ireland. It is important to note that reimbursement is confined to the costs of the care itself and that the rates of reimbursement cannot exceed the cost of provision of the care if it were provided in the Irish public health service.

The HSE operates the CBD in Ireland. Referral for care under the CBD may be made by a GP, a hospital consultant and certain other clinicians. In line with practice in other EU Member States, the HSE through the National Contact Point (NCP) provides information for patients on the CBD on its website which can be accessed at www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/1/schemes/cbd/ and also by phone at 056 7784551. The HSE advises where a patient is in any doubt as to the need to seek prior authorization before availing of a consultation or treatment abroad to contact the NCP.

The HSE also operates the Treatment Abroad Scheme (TAS) for persons entitled to treatment in another EU/EEA Member State or Switzerland under EU Regulation (EC) No. 883/2004, as per the procedures set out in EU Regulations (EC) No. 987/2009. The TAS provides for the cost of approved treatments in another EU/EEA member state or Switzerland through the issue of form E112 (IE) where the treatment is:

- Among the benefits provided for by Irish legislation;
- Not available in Ireland; and
- Not available within the time normally necessary for obtaining it in Ireland, taking account of the patient's current state of health and the probable course of the disease.

GPs refer patients to consultants for acute care and it is the treating consultant who, hav-

ing exhausted all treatment options including tertiary care within the country, refers the patient abroad under the terms of the TAS. The consultant must specify the specific treatment and in making the referral accepts clinical responsibility in relation to the physician and facility abroad where the patient will attend.

Applications to the TAS are processed and a determination given in accordance with the statutory framework prior to a patient travelling to avail of treatment. The statutory framework stipulates the patient must be a public patient and is required to have followed public patient pathways. Information on the TAS can be accessed on the HSE website at www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/1/schemes/treatmentabroad/ and also by phone at 056 7784551.

Under the terms of EU Regulation 883/2004, all persons ordinarily resident in the EU are entitled to apply for a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC). The EHIC certifies that the holder has the right to receive emergency healthcare during a temporary stay in any EU country as well as Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Iceland. This right is guaranteed to all persons who are covered by the public healthcare system of these countries. The EHIC holder has the right to receive necessary treatment in the host Member State's public healthcare system on the same terms and at the same cost as nationals of the State concerned. It should be noted that under bilateral arrangements, an EHIC is not required from Irish citizens when accessing emergency treatment in Northern Ireland and proof of residence (for example passport or driving licence) is sufficient.

Information on the EHIC can be accessed on the HSE website at www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/1/schemes/EHIC/ and also by phone at 061 461 105.

European Medicines Agency

353. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health if he will report on Ireland's bid to host the European Medicines Agency. [50046/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As a consequence of the United Kingdom's decision to leave the European Union, the European Medicines Agency (EMA) must relocate to another Member State. The EMA plays a vital role in the protection of the health of 500 million EU citizens through the scientific evaluation and safety monitoring of human and veterinary medicines and I believed that Dublin would be an ideal choice for the new host city. The relocation of the EMA represented an opportunity to attract a prestigious EU Agency which directly employs almost 1,000 staff and would attract many more high-quality jobs in associated sectors. The EMA is also key to maintaining the competitiveness of the European pharmaceutical industry, which is worth approximately €260 billion annually.

In October 2016 the Government decided to promote Dublin as a suitable new location for the Agency. The Irish offer, which was developed by a cross-sectoral working group led by my Department, with colleagues from the Department of the Taoiseach and Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, as well as representatives from the Health Products Regulatory Authority (HPRA), IDA Ireland and other Government Departments, was officially submitted to the European Council and the European Commission on 31 July 2017.

Officials in my Department worked closely with colleagues in the Department of the Taoiseach and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade on the strategy and campaign to promote the bid and demonstrate why it was felt Dublin represented a suitable location for the EMA, for Europe and for its citizens.

On 19 November 2017, Ireland's Permanent Representative to the European Union con-

firmed that Ireland was withdrawing its bid for the European Medicines Agency in order to focus on the offer for the European Banking Authority recognising the political challenge of pursuing two bids concurrently. The decision on the relocation of the agencies was taken by the General Affairs Council on 20 November. The Council chose Amsterdam as the new location for the EMA and I expect that the Netherlands will be a suitable new location for the Agency that will allow it to the greatest extent possible continue its important role in protecting patient safety.

Brexit Documents

354. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health if he has used a private email account to send or receive official documents or positions on Brexit; and, if so, the details of this correspondence. [50061/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I do not use a private email account to send or receive official documents or positions on Brexit

Health Services Data

355. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health if Ireland has a trauma director for the trauma services provided; if not, the reason therefor; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50068/17]

356. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the number of patients admitted and treated for trauma injuries in hospitals in each of the years 2008 to 2016 and to date in 2017, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50069/17]

357. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health his plans to centralise trauma care on two centres of excellence, as recently reported; the hospitals that are proposed to be downgraded; the hospitals that are proposed to be upgraded; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50070/17]

358. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the hospitals which treat trauma injuries; the trauma level each is currently at, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50071/17]

359. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health his plans for the north west and the south east in the event of Dublin and Cork being established as major trauma centres; the precautions that will be taken to ensure that these critical masses of population would have adequate cover; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50072/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 355 to 359, inclusive, together.

In 2015, my predecessor as the Minister for Health established a Trauma Policy Steering Group, chaired by Professor Eilis McGovern, to make recommendations in relation to the development of a trauma system for Ireland. Patients who have used trauma services and clinicians were at the heart of the development of the plan. The Trauma Steering Group completed its final report in July 2017 and I intend to bring it to Government before the end of the year.

This report is about delivering best outcomes for the small number of patients each year who suffer major trauma, that is, injuries which have the potential to cause prolonged disability

or death, and ensuring they get the right care in the right place at the right time. International evidence demonstrates that trauma systems are associated with better patient outcomes, improved access to care and reduced length of stay and cost-effectiveness, more lives being saved and fewer people being left with a disability.

Following on from recent media reports, it is important to say that the report is not about closing Emergency Departments or diminishing services. Traumatic injuries may be low, moderate or severe. Major trauma involves injuries which have the potential to cause prolonged disability or death. Based on available data, it is estimated that Ireland has approximately 1,600 major trauma patients each year. To put this in context, Emergency Departments provide 24/7 access for emergency and urgent presentations across the spectrum of medical and surgical conditions, with 1,157,074 new ED attendances in 2016.

In relation to the specific queries raised by the Deputy in relation to the number of patients admitted and treated for trauma injuries in hospitals in each of the years 2008 to 2016 and to date in 2017 and the hospitals that treat trauma injuries and the trauma level each is currently at, as this is a service issue, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

Neuro-Rehabilitation Services Provision

360. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Health the status of plans to build a neuro-rehabilitation unit in the midlands; if progress has been made in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50074/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): The Health Service Executive (HSE) Social Care Division and the HSE Clinical Programme and Strategy Division are working in tandem to progress the implementation of the *National Policy and Strategy for the provision of Neuro-rehabilitation Services in Ireland*. This is in line with the commitment to publish an implementation plan as outlined in the *Programme for a Partnership Government* and the commitment in the HSE National Service Plan 2017 and HSE Social Care Operational Plan for 2017.

As the Deputy's question relates to a service matter, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive for a direct reply to the Deputy.

Hospital Appointments Status

361. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will receive a hospital appointment. [50077/17]

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.

In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

Hospital Appointments Status

362. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Health when an operation will be provided for a person (details supplied); the reason for the delay in issuing a date for this procedure; if the person can undergo the procedure on the treatment purchase fund scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50081/17]

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.

Hospitals Funding

363. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health if the balance of the capital funding due to the Mercy University Hospital, Cork, will be released in 2018; when this money will be allocated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50085/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The balance of capital funding due on any construction project is paid in accordance with the terms and conditions of the specific contract and subject to the HSE's approval processes.

Home Help Service Eligibility

364. **Deputy Kevin O'Keeffe** asked the Minister for Health if an assessment for home help in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Cork will be arranged. [50086/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Primary Care Centres

365. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to dangerous parking practices ongoing opposite a primary care centre (details supplied) in County Meath; if his attention has been further drawn to the parking fees being charged at the centre; and his views on whether these charges are not in keeping with the charges in place in the nearby town centre. [50088/17]

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 Waiting Lists

366. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons on the speech and language therapy assessment waiting list; the number waiting less than four months, the number waiting four to 12 months, and the number waiting more than 12 months, respectively, for each local health area, in tabular form. [50089/17]

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 Waiting Lists

367. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons on the speech and language therapy treatment waiting list; the number waiting less than four months, the number waiting four to 12 months and the number waiting more than 12 months, respectively, for each local health area, in tabular form. [50090/17]

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.

Occupational Therapy Waiting Lists

368. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons on the occupational therapy first-time assessment waiting list; the number waiting less than four months, the number waiting four to 12 months and the number waiting more than 12 months, respectively; and the numbers waiting aged zero to four years, five to 17 years, 18 to 64 years and aged 65 years of age and above, respectively, for each local health area, in tabular form. [50091/17]

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.

Occupational Therapy Waiting Lists

369. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons on the occupational therapy first time treatment waiting list; the number waiting less than four months, the number waiting four to 12 months and the number waiting more than 12 months respectively; and the numbers waiting aged 0 to 4 years, 5 to 17 years, 18 to 64 years and 65 of age and above respectively for each local health area, in tabular form. [50092/17]

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.

Services for People with Disabilities

370. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Health the number of children awaiting a first assessment from the HSE under the Disability Act 2005 as of 17 November 2017 or the latest date available in each LHO, in tabular form. [50093/17]

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.

Treatment Abroad Scheme

371. **Deputy Gino Kenny** asked the Minister for Health the steps he will take to facilitate a person's (details supplied) need to travel to the UK; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50100/17]

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 HSE operates the Treatment Abroad Scheme (TAS) for persons entitled to treatment in another EU/EEA Member State or Switzerland under EU Regulation (EC) No. 883/2004, as per the procedures set out in EU Regulations (EC) No. 987/2009. The TAS provides for the cost of approved treatments in another EU/EEA member state or Switzerland through the issue of form E112 (IE) where the treatment is:

- Among the benefits provided for by Irish legislation;
- Not available in Ireland; and
- Not available within the time normally necessary for obtaining it in Ireland, taking account of the patient's current state of health and the probable course of the disease.

GPs refer patients to consultants for acute care and it is the treating consultant who, having exhausted all treatment options including tertiary care within the country, refers the patient abroad under the terms of the TAS. The consultant must specify the specific treatment and in making the referral accepts clinical responsibility in relation to the physician and facility abroad where the patient will attend.

Applications to the TAS are processed and a determination given in accordance with the statutory framework prior to a patient travelling to avail of treatment. The statutory framework stipulates the patient must be a public patient and is required to have followed public patient pathways. Information on the TAS can be accessed on the HSE website at www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/1/schemes/treatmentabroad/ and also by phone at 056 7784551.

In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

Medical Card Drugs Availability

372. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Health if the drug Constella 290 mgs OD is covered under the medical card scheme here; and when this drug was removed from distribution in pharmacies here (details supplied). [50101/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Under the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013, the HSE has statutory responsibility for the administration of the community drug schemes; therefore, the matter has been referred to the HSE for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

Respite Care Services Availability

373. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Health the number of weeks in the year respite centres (details supplied) are contracted to be open for; and the number of weekends they provided service in each of the years 2015, 2016 and to date in 2017, in tabular form. [50103/17]

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.

Services for People with Disabilities

374. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Health the process by which a person will be accepted and receive full-time residential care in a centre (details supplied). [50104/17]

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.

Services for People with Disabilities

375. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will receive full-time residential care in a centre. [50105/17]

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.

Departmental Bodies Data

376. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health the bodies under the aegis of his Department to which his Department provides in excess of €1 million funding per annum; the public funding received by these bodies; the bodies in which 50% or more of its income comes from public sources; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50117/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): My Department provides grants to a number of organisations, details of which are published in the Revised Estimates for Public Services 2017 (Vote 38), available on the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform website at www.per.gov.ie/en/rev/.

Part III of Vote 38 gives details of the agencies directly funded by my Department and the amount of funding provided. These are primarily research, developmental, consultative, supervisory, regulatory and advisory bodies.

All agencies funded by my Department receive over 50% of their income from the Exchequer with the exception of the HPRA (Health Products Regulatory Authority) as the authority is mainly self-funded through fee income. Funding from my Department to the HPRA accounts for approximately 15% of their total income.

The annual cost of running CORU (Health and Social Care Professionals Council) is currently being funded in the main by the Exchequer. The intention is that CORU will, when all its registers are established, be fully self-funding through the annual fees payable by its registrants.

Ambulance Service Staff

377. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Health the number of ambulance and associated personnel serving in each of the Sligo, Manorhamilton, Carrick-on-Shannon and Boyle stations; the number of newly-qualified ambulance and associated personnel assigned to each of the Sligo, Manorhamilton, Carrick-on-Shannon and Boyle stations in 2016 and to date in 2017; the number of newly-qualified ambulance and associated personnel in 2016 and to date in 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50129/17]

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

Ambulance Service

378. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Health when discussions on the provision of first responder schemes between the national ambulance service and the national directorate for fire and emergency management are expected to conclude; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50130/17]

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

Departmental Funding

379. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Health the reason an application for additional funding by a charity (details supplied) was denied despite the need for two additional full-time positions along with every-day costs for the charity to function. [50137/17]

380. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Health the funding and recognition of children with dyspraxia and DCD with the new allocation model of SNA teachers and a guarantee that these children will not be at a loss of support [50138/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): I propose to take Questions Nos. 379 and 380 together.

The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose, and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy's questions relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

Hospital Charges

381. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health the amount collected in accident and emergency charges from Beaumont Hospital, Dublin 9 for 2015, 2016 and to date in 2017, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50154/17]

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 the Deputy directly.

Hospital Services

382. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health if he will restore funding to carry out gynecomastia surgery with immediate effect and ensure there is an adequate budget in place for the year 2018 and subsequent years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50160/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter, I have asked the

HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

Hospital Waiting Lists

383. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health if a hospital appointment will be scheduled for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50161/17]

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.

In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

Infectious Diseases

384. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health when a clinical review of Lyme disease was last carried out by his Department; if a clinical review is planned; if not, if he will conduct a review; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50163/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Scientific Advisory Committee of the HPSC, the Infectious Diseases Society of Ireland, the Irish Society of Clinical Microbiologists, the Irish Institute of Clinical Neuroscience and the Irish College of General Practitioners agreed a Consensus Statement on the Clinical Management of Lyme Borreliosis, which endorsed the previously referenced, internationally recognised set of guidelines (those of the IDSA) to Medical Practitioners to ensure a standardised approach to the diagnosis and management of Lyme disease in Ireland.

The Scientific Advisory Committee of the HPSC has established a Lyme Borreliosis Sub-Committee, the aim of which is to develop strategies to undertake primary prevention in order to minimise the harm caused by Lyme Borreliosis in Ireland. In addition to staff from the HPSC, the membership of the Sub-Committee includes specialists in Public Health Medicine, Consultants in Infectious Diseases, Clinical Microbiology, Occupational Health an Entomologist from the Parks and Wildlife Service, a representative from the Local Government Management Agency, an Environmental Health Officer and, very importantly, a representative from Tick Talk Ireland, the primary Support Group for Lyme disease in Ireland.

The initial work of the Lyme Borreliosis Sub-committee involved a survey of laboratory methods for the diagnosis of Lyme borreliosis in Ireland, the development of Lyme borreliosis guidance for general practitioners, the publication of medical media articles to highlight diagnostics and laboratory methods relating to Lyme borreliosis available in Ireland. Material has been produced which is aimed both at the general public and General Practitioners. The Sub-Committee first met on 6 May 2015. Any changes to testing and treatment will take into account the report of the HPSC Sub-Committee.

Hospital Appointments Status

385. **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. [50165/17]

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 the Deputy directly.

Departmental Funding

386. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Health the funding or grant schemes available through his Department for active retirement groups; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50166/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Medical Card Applications

387. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health if an application for a medical card can be expedited for a person (details supplied) in County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50182/17]

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.

Disability Support Services Provision

388. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Health his plans to ensure that additional funding is provided to an organisation (details supplied) to assist it to provide necessary support services for children and parents; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50224/17]

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.

Counselling Services Provision

389. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the reason children under six years of age in County Kerry do not receive counselling in view of the fact that children under six years of age in County Cork do receive this counselling (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50252/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Hospital Services

390. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health when the report on the centralisation of trauma care will be brought before Dáil Éireann; if this report will be published in full; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50253/17]

391. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the hospitals in which trauma care will be terminated; the hospitals which have been referenced outside cities that could be used as trauma units; and the additional resources and expertise he plans to allocate to those units. [50254/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 390 and 391 together.

In 2015, my predecessor established a Trauma Policy Steering Group, chaired by Professor Eilís McGovern, to make recommendations in relation to the development of a trauma system for Ireland. Patients who have used trauma services and clinicians were at the heart of the development of the plan. The Steering Group completed its final report in July 2017 and I expect to bring the report to Cabinet before the end of the year.

This is about delivering best outcomes for the small number of patients each year who suffer major trauma, that is, injuries which have the potential to cause prolonged disability or death, and ensuring they get the right care in the right place at the right time.

Hospital Services

392. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health when the 50 new beds announced in the media will open at Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital, Drogheda; the additional funding and staff that will be allocated to these beds; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50255/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As part of the package of measures being funded for this winter and throughout 2018, funding of almost €3 million has been agreed to support the opening of significant new facilities at Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital Drogheda, including opening and refurbishment of around 50 of the beds in the new wardblock resulting in a net increase of 25 beds. In addition, this funding will also deliver the opening of the new

Emergency Department scheduled for May 2018.

In response to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

Medicinal Products Availability

393. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health his plans to address the needs of persons with PKU, in view of the HSE's recent refusal of kuvan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50259/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The HSE has statutory responsibility for decisions on pricing and reimbursement of medicines under the community drug schemes, under the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013.

In reaching a decision, the HSE examines all the evidence which may be relevant in its view for the decision and will take into account such expert opinions and recommendations which it may have sought, including, for example, advice from the National Centre for Pharmacoeconomics (NCPE).

Sapropterin (Kuvan) was considered under the national pricing and reimbursement processes in 2009. At that time, insufficient evidence was available to support the pricing and reimbursement application submitted.

In 2016, the HSE was advised that a new health technology assessment dossier would be submitted on sapropterin. The NCPE completed its assessment of the new dossier in September 2017 and did not recommend sapropterin for reimbursement, as it was not deemed cost effective at the price sought by the company.

The HSE assessment process is ongoing and the HSE will take into account any relevant expert advice when making its decision, in line with the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013.

Mental Health Services Data

394. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the number of young persons in each CHO awaiting CAMHS mental health treatment for more than three months, by month, to date in 2017, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50260/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Medical Card Eligibility

395. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Health if in the income assessment for medical cards for over and under 70 years of age the actual interest earned on savings can be assessed as an option rather than the nominal interest based on a rate per €1,000 euro over the exempted thresholds; if not, when the regulations governing the means test were changed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50268/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In the case of the assessment process for medical cards, both for under 70 and over 70 cards, investment amounts up to €36,000 for a single person and €72,000 for couples are disregarded for assessment purposes.

For savings and investment amounts over these limits, a notional rate of interest will be applied to determine the amount to be taken into account as income for assessment purposes. The notional rate is currently 0.68% with effect from 7 November 2017.

A medical card applicant may opt to have the actual income in interest received from the financial institution applied for the purposes of means assessment. The applicant must provide a certificate of interest paid in the last full calendar year.

Rare Diseases Strategy Implementation

396. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Health the number of the recommendations from the national rare disease plan that have been implemented; the number that will be implemented before the end of 2018; when the timeframe for the plan is due to come to a close; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50274/17]

397. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Health his plans to establish a new working group to review the implementation of the 2014 to 2018 rare disease plan; his further plans to issue a consultation in 2018 on the drafting of a new rare diseases plan to commence in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50275/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 396 and 397 together.

Earlier this year, the Department published a progress report on the National Rare Disease Plan and this is available on the Department's website at <http://health.gov.ie/blog/publications/interim-report-on-national-rare-disease-plan-for-ireland-2014-2018/>. It provides an update on all 48 recommendations as outlined in the Plan and progress to date.

One of the principal recommendations in the Plan was the establishment of a National Clinical Programme for Rare Diseases which is responsible for assisting with mapping and developing care pathways for rare diseases; facilitating timely access to centres of expertise- nationally and internationally; and developing care pathways with European Reference Centres for those ultra-rare disorders where there may not be sufficient expertise in Ireland.

In line with the National Rare Diseases Plan, the National Clinical Programme for Rare Diseases and the Department of Health, encouraged designated centres of expertise in Ireland to apply for membership of European Reference Networks during the first round of calls from the European Commission for participation in European Reference Networks. Three of these centres are now represented on ERN network.

Membership of ERNs will bring opportunities for engaging in research relating to Rare Diseases in keeping with the National Rare Diseases Plan. Further centres are expected to apply for membership or affiliated membership of ERNs when the next call takes place in early 2018.

The establishment of a National Rare Disease Office (NRDO) featured prominently in the recommendations of the Rare Disease plan. The office provides current and reliable information about rare diseases to the general public, health care professionals, researchers and policy makers. The National Rare Diseases Office is responsible for updating Orphanet Ireland. Orphanet is the international rare disease reference and information portal funded by the EU. The

office also manages the National Rare Diseases Information Line (a Freephone service) and provides online information about rare diseases on <http://www.rarediseases.ie/>.

A number of recommendations about access to appropriate drugs and technologies were contained in the plan. One chief recommendation in this regard refers to the HSE developing a Working Group to bring forward appropriate decision criteria for the reimbursement of orphan medicines and technologies; and that the approach should include an assessment system similar to that for cancer therapies established under the National Cancer Control Programme. The HSE Acute Hospitals Division has developed the terms of reference, required membership and reporting relationship for this committee. A Chairperson has now been identified and it is expected that the Group will convene in the near future .

The national plan for rare diseases recommended that the Health Identifiers Bill and the Health & Patient Safety Bill be published. The former was published in 2013 and enacted in 2014. The Individual Health Identifier part of the project is now being implemented by the HSE. A revised and much expanded General Scheme of a Health Information and Patient Safety Bill was approved by the government in November 2015 and published on the Department's website.

Two recommendations referred to training in rare diseases for healthcare professionals. The Department of Health has contacted formally the various healthcare representative and professional bodies about implementing these recommendations. The National Rare Diseases Office developed eLearning modules for healthcare professionals. These modules are available on <http://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/5/rarediseases/healthcareprofessionals.html>.

The issue of rare diseases and of the creation of an all-island patient register has been raised in the context of ongoing discussions at North-South meetings. It is also anticipated that the Model of Care for Rare Diseases will set out recommendations for rare disease registries. This model of care is in development by the National Clinical Programme for Rare Diseases.

The National Rare Disease Plan continues to be implemented. It recommended that an Oversight Implementation Group of relevant stakeholders, including patients' groups, be established to oversee and monitor implementation of the plan's recommendations. This group was established by the Department of Health in 2015 and it has met on a number of occasions .

The Department will consider the matter of a further plan as part of its Work Programme for 2018.

Question No. 398 answered with Question No. 323.

Nursing Home Accommodation Provision

399. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health if a suitable high dependency nursing home placement will be allocated to a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50277/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Hospital Appointments Status

400. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of a cataract operation for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50278/17]

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 Services

401. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Health his plans to deal with the projections (details supplied) which mean that an additional 500 acute beds will be required in the midlands region covering Mullingar, Tullamore and Portlaoise; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50279/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As the Deputy has referenced, the ESRI recently published projections of demand for healthcare at a national level. The projections are for the time period 2015 and 2030 and show significant increases in demand across all health services, including acute hospitals. The ESRI research shows the demand for in-patient bed days (exclusive of maternity activity) is projected to increase by between 32 and 37 per cent by 2030. It is important to emphasize that this analysis was carried out at a national level and is based on national population projections. It is also important to recognise that the analysis is based on current patterns of healthcare utilisation and does not take account of changes in our model of care, especially the development of a more comprehensive community-based care system as advocated by the Sláintecare report.

Complementary to the ESRI work, my Department is currently undertaking a national Health Service Capacity Review. As I have previously stated, this national Review has a wider scope than previous exercises and includes key elements of primary and community care infrastructure in addition to hospital facilities. It is examining in detail the demand for all key types of hospital activity, including inpatient, daycase, outpatients, critical care, and emergency, in addition to those non-acute areas which most impact on hospitals, such as primary care and the care of older persons.

A Steering Group is overseeing the project, with support from external consultants commissioned to provide technical, analytical and engagement expertise. An independent international peer review group is involved in ongoing review and validation of the methodology and approach. My Department has also undertaken a public consultation process to ensure that stakeholder views are fed into the Review.

The findings from this Review will provide a basis for determining both the extent of capacity requirements over the next 15 years and the type of capacity that is needed at a national and regional level. The emerging findings from the review will inform the development of a new 10 year national capital plan later this year.

I expect to receive the final report of the Capacity Review by the end of the year.

Disabilities Data

402. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons with dyspraxia development co-ordination disorder that are under 12 years of age, 12 to 18 years of age, and over 18 years of age, respectively; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50289/17]

403. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health the funding allocated to an organisation (details supplied) in each of the years 2014 to 2016 and to date in 2017; the reason recent requests from the organisation to fund two key posts were refused; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50290/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): I propose to take Questions Nos. 402 and 403 together.

The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose, and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy's questions relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

Hospital Services

404. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Health if a solution has been found to resume a group (details supplied) in Our Lady's Hospital, Manorhamilton, County Leitrim; if the relevant persons have been informed in relation to the service restarting; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50298/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

National Maternity Strategy

405. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Health the reason midwife-led care options, including homebirth, midwife-led hospital units and birthing centres were not included as part of the national maternity strategy creating a better future together 2016 to 2026; if his attention has been drawn to the inequalities facing pregnant women in County Donegal forced to birth in exclusively obstetric led units in Letterkenny or Sligo hospitals; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50299/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Ireland's first National Maternity Strategy - *Creating A Better Future Together 2016 - 2026* - recognises pregnancy and birth as a normal physiological process. It aims to ensure that appropriate care pathways are in place in order that mothers, babies and families get the right care, at the right time, by the right team and in the right place. Similarly, it recognises that, while all pregnant women need a certain level of support, some will require more specialised care. Accordingly, it proposes an integrated model

that delivers care at the lowest level of complexity and encompasses all the necessary safety nets in line with patient safety principles.

The Strategy makes it clear that women should be offered choice regarding their preferred pathway of care, in line with their clinical needs and best practice. The model consists of three care pathways - supported, assisted and specialised. The Supported Care Pathway is intended for normal-risk mothers and babies, with midwives leading and delivering care within a multi-disciplinary framework. Care will be delivered by the community midwifery team, with most antenatal and postnatal care being provided in the community and home settings. The woman can exercise a choice with her healthcare professional with regard to the birth setting, which may be in an Alongside Birth Centre in the hospital, or at home. The Assisted Care Pathway is intended for mothers and babies considered to be at medium risk, and for normal-risk women who choose an obstetric service, while the Specialised Care Pathway is intended for high-risk mothers and babies.

With regard to birth settings, the Strategy proposes Alongside Birth Centres for the Supported Care Pathway and Specialised Birth Centres (current labour ward) for the Assisted and Specialised Care Pathways. Freestanding birth centres are not recommended in the Strategy as it is considered that it will first be necessary to monitor and evaluate the implementation of Alongside Birth Centres in an Irish context.

In relation to the terminology used to describe the new model of care, the Strategy, unapologetically, places mothers at the centre. Therefore, profession-centric terms such as “consultant led” and “midwifery led” have been avoided, as far as possible, as they incorrectly place an emphasis on the profession. As I have outlined already, in future, maternity care in Ireland will be provided in an integrated manner, by a multidisciplinary team, with women seeing the most appropriate professional, based on their individual need.

Finally, I should mention that the Strategy will be implemented on a phased basis over the coming years and this work will be led by the HSE National Women & Infants Health Programme. Last month, I was pleased to launch the Programme’s detailed Implementation Plan for the Strategy. That plan seeks to ensure that each maternity network will have all three care pathways in place and operational in 2018. The Plan also provides that by early 2019, a minimum of 20% of pregnant women presenting at our maternity hospitals/units, including those units in the north west, will have access to the supported care pathway.

Disability Services Funding

406. **Deputy Paul Murphy** asked the Minister for Health the reason for the cuts made to organisations providing services and advocacy for those that suffer from dyspraxia-DCD; his plans to consider increasing the funding to organisations such as an organisation (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50302/17]

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.

Occupational Therapy Staff

407. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Health the number of posts filled for HSE occupational therapists in each primary care setting in County Donegal; the number of vacant occupational therapist posts in the county; the reason for the vacancy to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50310/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly on this matter.

Home Help Service

408. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health if home help services will be awarded to a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50325/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Disability Support Services Provision

409. **Deputy Jan O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Health when the dyspraxia assessment which has been ongoing since 2015 for a person (details supplied) in County Louth will be completed and available to the family; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50326/17]

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 an individual case, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

Emergency Departments Closures

410. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Health the status of the centralisation of trauma units; his plans to close St Luke's Hospital Kilkenny accident and emergency unit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50329/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I have no plans to close the Emergency Department at St Luke's Hospital, Kilkenny.

In 2015, my predecessor as Minister for Health established a Trauma Policy Steering Group, chaired by Professor Eilis McGovern, to make recommendations in relation to the development

of a trauma system for Ireland. Patients who have used trauma services and clinicians were at the heart of the development of the plan. The Group has now completed its report and I intend to bring it to Cabinet before the end of the year.

This is about delivering best outcomes for the small number of patients each year who suffer major trauma, that is, injuries which have the potential to cause prolonged disability or death, and ensuring they get the right care in the right place at the right time.

Mental Health Services Data

411. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons that have accessed psychiatric day care services in both Drogheda day care centre and Ladywell day care in County Louth in each of the years 2011 to 2016 and to date in 2017 [50336/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Mental Health Services Data

412. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the number of general adult community mental health teams operating in County Louth; the location of these teams; and the catchment areas for each. [50337/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Mental Health Services Data

413. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the number of psychiatry of old age multi-disciplinary teams that are operating in County Louth; the location of these teams; and the catchment area for each. [50338/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Mental Health Services

414. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the catchment area served, services offered and resources allocated to the Louth based mental health rehabilitation team; when the team was established; and the resources that have been allocated to provide these services. [50339/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Mental Health Services Staff

415. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the status of the introduction of health care assistants to the staff complement at the department of psychiatry in Drogheda; and the number of these assistants have been recruited to date. [50340/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Mental Health Services

416. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the status of two adult mental health intellectual disability teams which have been approved; when these teams will be established; the location of these teams; and the resources that have been allocated to them. [50341/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Patient Data

417. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the number of homeless persons residing in the department of psychiatry in Drogheda; and the number of homeless persons that have used the services each month since the facility opened. [50342/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Disability Services Funding

418. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Minister for Health the funding allocated to a group (details supplied) for 2015, 2016 and 2017; if all of these funds have been drawn down; if additional funding was requested; if so, the amount that was requested, approved and drawn down; the budget that is planned for 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50344/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): The allocation for Disability Services for 2018 will be over €1.76 billion. The Health Service Executive is currently in the process of finalising its National Service Plan for 2018, in consultation with officials from the Department. Detailed Operational Plans for the coming year for each of the Executive's service areas, including disability services, will stem from this process. Pending the conclusion of this process, I am not in a position to comment on the budget allocation for individual organisations for 2018.

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.

Disability Support Services Provision

419. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Health the supports the HSE has in place for persons with developmental co-ordination disorder; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50351/17]

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.

Hospital Waiting Lists

420. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health the waiting times for cataract surgery by county, in tabular form; the length of time persons have been waiting; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50355/17]

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

421. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) in County Donegal will receive an appointment at the ENT clinic at Letterkenny University Hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50356/17]

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.

Air Ambulance Service Operations

422. **Deputy Denise Mitchell** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to concerns raised by a group (details supplied) regarding the regular landing of air ambulance helicopters on a sports pitch in close proximity to homes in an estate; and his plans for the creation of a dedicated landing zone for air ambulance helicopters at Beaumont Hospital. [50369/17]

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

Departmental Contracts Data

423. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Health the public contracts between his Department and companies (details supplied) in each of the years 2011 to 2016; the value of each contract; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50403/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): It is the policy in my Department only to engage the services of external consultants where it is felt to be appropriate and cost-effective, taking account of Government decisions and policy including procurement protocols on the matter.

The Department held a contract with Ernst & Young for advice and reports relating to the development of the Programme Management Office within the Department. The contract was awarded in 2013 and ended in 2014. Total payments made were €118,757. For Deloitte & Touche, a contract was held to provide a report and review of the Nursing Home Support Scheme in 2013. The contract ended in 2014. Total value was €73,800. KPMG was awarded a contract in 2016 to provide advice regarding the Working Better Together organisational development initiative. The contract is now complete and total expenditure was €14,145.

Hospitals Building Programme

424. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the amount allocated to the construction of the new Central Mental Hospital in this year's mental health budget; the sum allocated to the said hospital to date in 2017; the estimated cost of the new Central Mental Hospital's construction; the estimated date of completion of the hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50426/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Primary Care Strategy Roll-out

425. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health his plans for the development of primary care centres in County Wexford towns, including Gorey, Enniscorthy and New Ross respectively; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50427/17]

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.

Health Services Provision

426. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health when the review of cardiac care services here, specifically at University Hospital Waterford will be conducted; when the terms of reference for this review will be available; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50430/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): A National Review of Specialist Cardiac Services that focuses on services for adults will commence shortly. Specialist cardiac services cover hospital-based specialist services for the diagnosis and treatment of cardiac disease. This includes the services provided in catheterisation laboratories, both scheduled and unscheduled. The intention of the National Review is to set out minimum service requirements, relating to staffing, activity, performance, and other relevant measures, based on evidence where available, and/or conform to international best practice and standards. In examining the scope of this review, it has been determined that the most appropriate and effective approach, in order to ensure the best possible clinical outcomes, is to consider all adult cardiac service needs and their optimal service configuration as a whole. This comprehensive National Review of all specialist cardiac services will clearly include data from existing service provision including data related to University Hospital Waterford.

Emergency Departments Closures

427. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health if his review of potential trauma care centre closures is reviewing operations at Wexford General Hospital, St. Luke's Hospital, Kilkenny and South Tipperary General Hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50433/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In 2015, my predecessor established a Trauma Policy Steering Group, chaired by Professor Eilis McGovern, to make recommendations in relation to the development of a trauma system for Ireland. Patients who have used trauma services and clinicians were at the heart of the development of the plan. The Group has now completed its report and I intend to bring it to Cabinet before the end of the year.

This is about delivering best outcomes for the small number of patients each year who suffer major trauma, that is, injuries which have the potential to cause prolonged disability or death, and ensuring they get the right care in the right place at the right time.

Following on from recent media reports, it is important to say that the report is not about closing Emergency Departments or diminishing services. Traumatic injuries may be low, moderate or severe. Major trauma involves injuries which have the potential to cause prolonged disability or death.

Based on available data, it is estimated that Ireland has approximately 1,600 major trauma patients each year. Trauma care is a subset of overall Emergency Department activity. Emergency Departments provide 24/7 access for emergency and urgent presentations across the spectrum of medical and surgical conditions with 1,157,074 new Emergency Department attendances in 2016.

Mental Health Commission Reports

428. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health if he will request that the Mental

Health Commission undertake a catchment area report for County Louth. [50437/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Mental Health Commission customarily conducts an overview of national mental health services in Ireland. The Inspector of Mental Health Services analyses each of the Community Health Organisations and produces her findings in a report. This includes Community Health Organisation 8, in which Co. Louth is based.

The most recent Overview of Mental Health Services Report was 2016. This report gives a breakdown of the population, funding, in-patient facilities, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, 24-hour supervised residences, service user initiatives and challenges facing the area.

In addition, the Mental Health Commission is required under the Mental Health Act 2001 to inspect all approved mental health centres in Ireland. There are two approved centres in Louth - Drogheda Department of Psychiatry, Drogheda and St Ita's Ward, St. Brigid's Hospital, Ardee. The Inspectorate has published inspection reports on both of these approved centres and these are available on the MHC website.

Mental Health Services Expenditure

429. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the closing budget 2016 allocated to each CHO area in respect of mental health services; and the spend per capita in each of these CHO areas. [50438/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Mental Health Services

430. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the reason counties Louth and Meath mental health services are still not integrated into CHO area 8 services; the reason for counties Louth and Meath services being managed separately from the midlands mental health services; and if he plans this separation to be permanent. [50439/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Mental Health Services Data

431. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the mental health services in County Louth; the population each of these serve; and the funding that has been allocated to each of these services for 2016 and 2017. [50440/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Charitable and Voluntary Organisations

432. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Health the amount of funding that was made available to a charity (details supplied) in 2016 and 2017; his plans to increase funding in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50445/17]

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.

Ombudsman's Remit

433. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Minister for Health the status of legislation promised by the former Minister for Health to extend the powers of the Ombudsman to deal with complaints by hospital patients that remain unresolved following interaction with health service providers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50446/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The functions and powers of the Ombudsman are set out under the Ombudsman Act 1980, and responsibility for the Office of the Ombudsman comes under the aegis of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

The Ombudsman published a report in 2015 entitled "Learning to Get Better - An investigation by the Ombudsman into how public hospitals handle complaints". One of the recommendations in that report was that "Consideration should be given on a wider front to amending the statutory complaints process (and the remit of the Ombudsman) to allow for the inclusion of clinical judgement as the subject about which a complaint can be made". Under current legislation the Ombudsman cannot examine complaints which relate to a person acting on behalf of the HSE and which, in his opinion, relate solely to the exercise of clinical judgement in the diagnosis or care or treatment of a patient. However, the Ombudsman can examine the administrative actions of healthcare professionals and administrators taken in the course of clinical work which do not involve clinical judgement.

My department is currently developing a Patient Safety Complaints and Advocacy Policy. Work to date has included an examination of both national and international experience of the management of patient safety complaints and the legal frameworks involved. In addition a national public consultation took place in May and June of this year. This public consultation exercise was open to the public, patients, users, staff and relevant organisations. In total, 174 submissions were received. Meetings have also taken place with 23 key stakeholders, representing a broad spectrum of interested parties, including patient organisations, service providers, the Ombudsman's office, service regulators and professional regulators. The policy will be finalised shortly.

Autism Support Services

434. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health if his Department and the HSE are pursuing a policy of providing an appropriate day service for school leavers with au-

tism; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50449/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): This Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide them with greater freedom in accessing the services they choose, and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives.

HSE Disability Services engages in a detailed and person centred process with a wide range of agencies every year to identify the most appropriate service provider and quantum of service and to meet the individual needs of each school leaver. This process takes place over a number of months and is led by the needs of each individual school leaver. In addition, HSE Disability Services also engages with individual school leaver families to listen to, and address, any concerns they may have regarding the process.

The assessment of needs for each individual school leaver who will require a day service in 2018 has already commenced.

Nursing Staff Recruitment

435. **Deputy Noel Rock** asked the Minister for Health if he will request the HSE to expedite the appointment of two clinical nurses for a service (details supplied) through the community alcohol response and engagement initiative; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50450/17]

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

Charitable and Voluntary Organisations

436. **Deputy Noel Rock** asked the Minister for Health if he will review the funding for a charity (details supplied) after its recent application to the HSE for funding for an education officer and information officer was refused without formal reasoning for the decision; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50452/17]

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.

Hospital Waiting Lists

437. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 162 on 8 November 2017, when a person will be facilitated (details supplied); and if he will

make a statement on the matter. [50463/17]

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.

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

438. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) in County Cork will undergo an assessment. [50477/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Hospital Waiting Lists

439. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health if he will review the case of a person (details supplied); and if it will be referred to the HSE to offer an appointment. [50479/17]

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.

Cross-Border Health Initiatives

440. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons that availed of treatment under the cross-border directive scheme in the past three years and to date in 2017, in Northern Ireland; the treatments carried out; and the type of treatment and costs involved, in tabular form. [50490/17]

441. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons that availed of treatment under the cross-border directive scheme in the past three years and to date in 2017, in Britain; the treatments carried out; and the type of treatment and costs involved, in tabular form.

form. [50491/17]

442. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons in each CHO area that have availed of treatments under the cross-border directive scheme for the past three years; the cost to his Department for each of these years, in tabular form. [50492/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 440 to 442, inclusive, together.

As the HSE has responsibility for the administration of the Cross Border Directive, I have asked the HSE to examine the issues raised and to reply to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Cross-Border Health Initiatives

443. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the health service preparations his Department has made regarding Brexit to address the potential impact it may have on the cross-border health care directive scheme. [50493/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade has responsibility for coordinating the whole-of-Government response to Brexit. In this capacity, the Department of Health is working closely with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to address the many challenges resulting from Brexit. This cooperation also involves the relevant State Agencies.

Work at Cabinet level is being prepared through cross-Departmental coordination structures. These represent a frequent and active channel through which all relevant Departments are providing their research, analysis and overall policy input to the Government's wider response to Brexit, including its priorities for the ongoing Article 50 negotiations between the EU and the UK. As the outcome of the negotiations is not yet known, an important focus of the planning and preparation being undertaken through these structures is on deepening the Government's analysis and understanding of the exact consequences of a range of different possible scenarios. This represents an intensification of efforts to build on the Government's contingency planning.

The Department of Health and its agencies have been conducting detailed analysis on the impacts of Brexit in the area of Health, including the Cross Border Directive. 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.

Hospital Procedures

444. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health the waiting times for procedures (details supplied) by county, in tabular form; the timeframe for same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50508/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris)(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.

Home Care Packages

445. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) in County Donegal will receive a decision in respect of an application for a home care package; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50509/17]

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 an individual case, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

National Maternity Hospital Status

446. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Health the status of the proposed national maternity hospital at St. Vincent's hospital site in Dublin; the arrangement entered into concerning ownership of the proposed national maternity hospital; the persons or group that will own this hospital; if there are effective beneficial owners of the hospital site; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50523/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Following the grant of planning permission for the new National Maternity Hospital on the St Vincent's University Hospital campus, the Design Team is continuing to work on the detailed design of the hospital and the preparation of tender documents. This development will of course represent the flagship project of the National Maternity Strategy and will constitute the largest single investment ever made in maternity services in Ireland.

Work is also continuing on the development of a legal framework which will protect the State's significant investment in the hospital. The Deputy will, I hope, appreciate that pending the finalisation of an agreement between all the stakeholders, it is premature for me to give any further information at this point.

Medicinal Products Availability

447. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Health his plans for further dialogue with industry on finding solutions for access for persons to new medicines; if speed of access and funding growth for new medicines will be ensured in view of his commitments at the recent meeting of an association (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50530/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Medicines play a vital role in improving the overall health of Irish patients. Securing affordable access to existing and new medicines in a timely manner is a key objective of the Irish Health Service. However, the challenge is delivering on this objective in an affordable and sustainable way in line with the resources allocated by the Dáil and the relevant legislative provisions. Expenditure on medicines represents one of the largest areas of expenditure across the health service and will continue to grow in the years ahead as our health service continues to meet the needs of our citizens

My Department and the HSE are engaging in a number of initiatives which have led and will continue to lead to better access to medicines for patients, value for the taxpayer and the cost-effective provision of medicines in Ireland. Key initiatives include reference and generic substitution, under the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013, the four year Framework Agreement on the Supply and Pricing of Medicines with IPHA, the Medicines Management Programme and National Drugs Management Programme within the HSE, and the development of a National Biosimilar Medicines Policy. Ireland is also participating in a number of discussions amongst EU Member states to explore possible areas for collaboration including potential joint price negotiations and procurement.

However, access to medicines is not solely a funding issue. A significant barrier to accessing new medicines is the price being sought by some manufacturers for their products. The solution to increased access is multifaceted and is not simply a matter of allocating more funding for medicines at the expense of other health or public services. The health service must continue to seek better value and lower costs for both existing and new treatments.

The HSE has statutory responsibility for decisions on pricing and reimbursement of medicines under the community drugs schemes, in accordance with the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013. This Act gives full statutory powers to the HSE to assess and make decision on the reimbursement of medicines, taking account of expert opinion as appropriate. There is also an increased level of engagement and commercial negotiations between the HSE and manufacturers in an effort to reduce the price to affordable levels. So while this process is resource intensive, it is clear that as a result of such a robust and scientific process, Ireland is paying significantly less for medicines and the ability to invest is enhanced.

In my recent speech at the IPHA Annual Meeting and Dinner, I highlighted the need for innovative solutions to accessing new medicines. To this end, my Department will continue to consider how improvements can be made to the current system, and will, as part of this work, engage with key stakeholders in 2018 in this regard.

Hospital Waiting Lists

448. **Deputy Martin Kenny** asked the Minister for Health the reason a person (details supplied) has been waiting for an appointment for surgery for over six months; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50544/17]

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 Provision

449. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Health if the new mental health facility for Sligo will open before the end of 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50570/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Mental Health Services Funding

450. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Health the amount of funding for mental health services in CHO1 in 2017; the amount of underspend on mental health services in CHO1 in 2017; the amount of funding allocated for mental health services in CHO1 in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50571/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Hospital Appointments Status

451. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an operation for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50610/17]

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.

Dental Services Waiting Lists

452. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons awaiting dental surgery in County Cork under the medical card scheme; the expected waiting time for persons on this list; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50613/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): 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.

Orthodontic Services Waiting Lists

453. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Health the number of children

awaiting orthodontic treatment in County Cork to date; the expected waiting time for these children; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50614/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Dental Services Data

454. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Health the number of medical card holders referred to the UCC dental school for treatment by a HSE principal dental surgeon in HSE south to date in 2017; the number of these referrals that took place in each of the years 2014 to 2016; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50615/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Hospital Staff Data

455. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health if he will report on the number of full-time epidermolysis bullosa outreach nurses in Beaumont hospital, Dublin 9 in each of the years 2014 to 2016 and to date in 2017; his plans to increase this number; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50629/17]

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.

Health Services

456. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health if funding for the refurbishment of a centre (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50630/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Your question has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply as the delivery of the healthcare infrastructure is a service matter.

Health Services Staff Remuneration

457. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Health if a person (details supplied) in County Westmeath is entitled to a pension for their service in the health service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50631/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly on this matter.

Drugs Payment Scheme Coverage

458. **Deputy Bobby Aylward** asked the Minister for Health if there has been a change to the reimbursement status of a drug (details supplied) in respect of the medical card scheme; the

reasons for same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50641/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Under the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013, the HSE has statutory responsibility for the administration of the community drug schemes; therefore, the matter has been referred to the HSE for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

Hospital Services

459. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Health if a response will issue to correspondence from a person (details supplied) regarding the need for a cath lab in Lourdes hospital, Drogheda; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50642/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): My Private Office has confirmed that this correspondence has been received. A reply to this letter will issue shortly.

Based on this country's population, specialist cardiac cath lab services are only provided in a number of hospitals in order to ensure that the services provided achieve the required standards of safety, quality and sustainability in the interests of patients.

I have announced my intention to commence a National Review of Specialist Cardiac Services that focuses on services for adults.

Specialist cardiac services cover hospital-based specialist services for the diagnosis and treatment of cardiac disease. This includes the services provided in catheterisation laboratories, both scheduled and unscheduled. The intention of the National Review is to set out minimum service requirements, relating to staffing, activity, performance, and other relevant measures, based on evidence where available, and/or conform to international best practice and standards. The National Review by its nature will encompass considerations for all acute hospitals. It will also consider the sustainability of the service for the following 10-15 years, with specific regard to manpower requirements, capital requirements and clinical/technological advances.

Health Services Staff Data

460. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health the number of clinical directors employed by the health service; the details of their location and number of consultants which they are required to oversee in each case; the reporting arrangements in place to oversee the work of the directors; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50644/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly on this matter.

Hospital Waiting Lists Data

461. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide a list of all hospitals which do not comply with the common waiting list which public hospitals are required to operate under the terms of the consultants contract 2008; the oversight arrangements in place to ensure compliance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50645/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris)(Deputy Simon Harris): The HIQA Report

and Recommendations on Patient Referrals from General Practice to Outpatient and Radiology Services, including the National Standard for Patient Referral Information published in 2011 makes a number of recommendation in relation to Secondary Care Referral Management Systems, including that GP should address referrals in the first instance to a central point within a hospital, then to the relevant specialty/service, followed by named consultant if relevant. The approach is supported in the report by international evidence.

With regard to the Consultant Contract 2008, a key objective of the Contract is to improve access for public patients to public hospital care. Under the Consultant's Contract 2008 and HSE guidance issued from the National Director of Acute Hospitals in September 2009 a common waiting list for treatment, diagnostic investigations, tests and procedures on an outpatient basis in public hospitals is identified. In addition, under HSE policy, private outpatients may not attend public outpatient consultant-led clinics.

Finally, under the HSE National Framework for operation and management of Outpatient Departments published in 2013, referrals for outpatient appointments to a named consultant should be to the specialty involved, unless it is more appropriate for a particular patient to be managed by a specific consultant.

In response to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

Hospital Services

462. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Health the criteria for the provision of cath labs in acute hospitals; the number of dedicated staff needed; the costs of staff and equipment; if this facility will be provided in Lourdes hospital in Drogheda; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50648/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Based on this country's population, specialist cardiac cath lab services are only provided in a number of hospitals in order to ensure that the services provided achieve the required standards of safety, quality and sustainability in the interests of patients.

I have announced my intention to commence a National Review of Specialist Cardiac Services that focuses on services for adults.

Specialist cardiac services cover hospital-based specialist services for the diagnosis and treatment of cardiac disease. This includes the services provided in catheterisation laboratories, both scheduled and unscheduled. The intention of the National Review is to set out minimum service requirements, relating to staffing, activity, performance, and other relevant measures, based on evidence where available, and/or conform to international best practice and standards. The National Review by its nature will encompass considerations for all acute hospitals. It will also consider the sustainability of the service for the following 10-15 years, with specific regard to manpower requirements, capital requirements and clinical/technological advances.

Hospital Overcrowding

463. **Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher** asked the Minister for Health his plans for Letterkenny University Hospital under the winter initiative 2017; if his attention has been drawn to the critical needs of the hospital at present due to the overcrowding on a regular basis of the ac-

cident and emergency department; the additional measures he is proposing to assist the hospital in meeting the increased demands; the additional staff numbers and resources being provided for the hospital under this initiative; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50655/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As part of Budget 2018, an additional €40 million was announced for 2017 to prepare for and manage the expected peak in demand for our health services over the upcoming winter period. A further €40 million has been allocated for measures to improve access to unscheduled care in 2018.

In addition, I can confirm to the Deputy that all Hospital Groups and Community Health Organisations, including Letterkenny University Hospital, have developed and put in place integrated winter preparedness plans for their locality focussed on planning and escalation preparedness, maintaining patient flow processes and ensuring public health preparedness.

Community Care

464. **Deputy Pat Buckley** asked the Minister for Health his plans to ensure that Fermoy community hospital remains open and is resourced adequately to meet the needs of the area [50661/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health(Deputy Jim Daly): As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Medical Card Eligibility

465. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health if he will revisit the eligibility rules for medical cards for persons over 70 years of age who suffer from chronic illness and are over the income limit (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50662/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Under the Health (Alteration of Criteria for Eligibility) (No. 2) Act 2013, when a person attains the age of 70, the medical card income limits are €500 gross income per week for a single person and €900 gross income per week for a couple. Persons aged 70 or older who are assessed as ineligible under the gross income thresholds may also have their eligibility assessed under the general means-tested medical card scheme if they so wish, for example in the event that they face particularly high expenses, e.g. nursing home or medication costs. This scheme is open to all persons, irrespective of their age and assessment is based on net income and assessable outgoing expenses. The general scheme, although having lower income thresholds, provides for income disregards and relevant outgoings to be taken into account in the assessment process.

Under the medical card legislation, having a particular illness in itself, does not establish eligibility for a medical card and therefore, the medical conditions of applicants for this scheme are not monitored on that basis. However, every effort is made by the HSE, within the framework of the legislation, to support applicants in applying for a medical card and, in particular, to take full account of the difficult circumstances in the case of applicants who may be in excess of the income guidelines.

In certain circumstances, the HSE may exercise discretion and grant a medical card, even though an applicant exceeds his or her income threshold, where he or she faces difficult circum-

stances, such as extra costs arising from an illness. Social and medical issues are considered when determining whether undue hardship exists for an individual accessing general practitioner or other medical services. The HSE affords applicants the opportunity to furnish supporting information and documentation to fully take account of all the relevant circumstances that may benefit them in the assessment, including medical evidence of cost and necessary expenses. In addition, from August 2015, all persons aged 70 or older qualify for a GP Visit Card, regardless of income.

There are no proposals at present to amend the legislation for the granting of eligibility for medical cards for persons aged 70 and over. However, it should be noted that the gross income limits are reviewed annually and considered in the context of the budget.

With regard to services for people with Parkinson's disease, the HSE funds a range of community services and supports to enable each individual to achieve their full potential and maximise independence, including living as independently as possible. Services are provided in a variety of community and residential setting in partnership with service users, their families and carers and a range of statutory, non-statutory, voluntary and community groups. Services are provided either directly by the HSE or through a range of voluntary service providers.

Services are accessed through an application process through the relevant local health office or through referrals from public health nurses or other community based staff. Resource allocation is determined by the needs of the individual, compliance with prioritisation criteria and the level of resources available.

Mental Health Services Data

466. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Health the number of children and adolescents waiting zero to three months, three to six months, six to nine months, nine to 12 months, 12 to 18 months, 18 to 24 months and over 24 months for an appointment for child and adolescent mental health services in each of the CHOs, in tabular form, at the end of October 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50663/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Hospital Consultant Contracts

467. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Health his plans to carry out a full review of the operation of consultants' contracts by hospital and ensure that all consultants work their full allocation of hours in view of recent media revelations (details supplied) regarding the contracts and hours worked by consultants in public hospitals. [50669/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): A key objective of Consultant Contract 2008 is to improve access for public patients to public hospital care. Latest data from September 2017 shows that the public-private mix at a system level stands at 82% public for elective in-patient work and at almost 86% for day-case work. This is consistent with the typical 80/20 split provided for in the consultant contract.

Arrangements concerning implementation and monitoring of Consultant Contract 2008 including the provisions in relation to private practice are matters for the HSE in the first instance. Section 20 of the Contract provides a framework for the regulation of private practice, moni-

toring of the applicable ratio and steps to be taken where it is exceeded. The responsibility for reporting individual consultant compliance with their contract was formally delegated to the Hospital Groups in 2014. The main reason for this was to ensure local accountability. Hospitals know their consultants and the work they deliver.

However it seems clear that the arrangements in place are not robust enough to deliver compliance in all circumstances and, as a result, some consultants are able to engage in private practice activity at levels that significantly exceed the permitted levels, or else they may engage in significant levels of off-site private practice, although their contract does not provide for this. It is incumbent on publicly-funded hospitals to ensure compliance with the terms of the contract, including the provisions in relation to private practice. For some time my Department has been working closely with the HSE on this. It wrote to the HSE in July requesting that the HSE satisfy itself that no consultant is engaged, or will be permitted to engage, in private practice beyond the level, if any, provided for in their contract.

I am very clear that consultants must deliver their work commitment to the public system. It is the responsibility of management to make sure these contracts are being enforced and I have asked the HSE to ensure that more robust measures are in place in 2018 to make sure consultants comply with their contractual obligations. I will require absolute assurances on this point.

Foireann Roinne

468. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Sláinte cén líon iomlán foirne atá fostaíte ina Roinn faoi láthair; cé mhéid post atá daingnithe nó aitheanta ag an Roinn (i scéim teanga, nó ar aon bhealach eile) mar phoist a bhfuil riachtanas Gaeilge ag baint leo; cé mhéid duine atá ann ag a bhfuil líofacht i nGaeilge agus atá ag feidhmiú sna poist sin atá daingnithe nó aitheanta mar phoist a bhfuil riachtanas Gaeilge ag baint leo; an bhfuil sé beartaithe ag an tráth seo aon phost eile de chuid na Roinne a aithint mar phoist a bhfuil riachtanas Gaeilge. [50684/17]

469. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Sláinte cé mhéid folúntas a líonadh ina Roinn ó thús na bliana seo; cé mhéid de na folúntais sin a bhain le poist a bhí sainaitheanta mar phoist a raibh Gaeilge riachtanach ina leith; cé mhéid folúntas atá le líonadh faoi láthair agus cé mhéid de na folúntais siúd atá sainaitheanta mar fholúntais a bhfuil riachtanas Gaeilge ag baint leo. [50701/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 468 and 469 together.

Tá rún daingean ag mo Roinn a chinntiú gur féidir freastal a mhéid is féidir ar chustaiméirí ar mian leo a gcuid gnó a dhéanamh trí mheán na Gaeilge. Ba é 433 dhuine an líon iomlán daoine, mar Choibhéis Lánaimseartha, a bhí ag obair sa Roinn ag deireadh mhí Dheireadh Fómhair 2017. Den líon sin, tá seachtar ball foirne, nó beagnach 2%, in ann a gcuid dualgas a chur i gcrích sa Ghaeilge agus sa Bhéarla araon. Tugtar freagra sa Ghaeilge ar an gcomhfhreagra ar fad a sheoltar chuig an Roinn sa Ghaeilge agus cuirtear aon cheisteanna teileafóin ar aghaidh chuig duine de na baill foirne atá inniúil sa Ghaeilge.

Luaitear sa Scéim Teanga 2015-2018 ón Roinn Sláinte go sainaitheoidh an Roinn aon phoist dá bhfuil inniúlacht sa Ghaeilge ina riachtanas. Shainaithin an Roinn post amháin den sórt sin agus cheap sí ball foirne chuig an ról ina dhiaidh sin. Níl aon fholúntais ar fáil faoi láthair maidir le poist ina bhfuil inniúlacht sa Ghaeilge ag teastáil.

Is é beartas na Roinne leibhéal agus cáilíocht na seirbhíse reatha trí mheán na Gaeilge a

choinneáil ar bun.

Harbours and Piers Maintenance

470. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the resources his Department has to ensure the removal of old boats from the coastline; the powers local authorities have to force persons to remove old boats (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49874/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): My Department has responsibility under the Fishery Harbours Centre Act, 1968 (as amended) for the six Fishery Harbour Centres located at Howth, Dunmore East, Castletownbere, An Daingean, Ros an Mhíl and Killybegs. The Fishery Harbour Centres (Management, Control, Operation and Development) Bye-Laws 1979 give the Harbour Master powers to remove wrecked or derelict vessels from the confines of these six Fishery Harbour Centres. This is a rare occurrence and monies are made available when necessary on a case by case basis.

The Receiver of wrecks, who is a Revenue Official appointed by the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, also has a role in respect of any wrecks found in or on the shores of the sea or any tidal water or harbour.

The Deputy will be aware that other State owned harbour infrastructure around the coast does not fall within the remit of my Department. I would therefore suggest that the Deputy contact the relevant public body with responsibility for these, including the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport in respect of State port companies and the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government in respect of ports or harbours managed by local authorities, in this case Wexford County Council.

Agriculture Scheme Payments

471. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a person (details supplied) will be granted ANC and BPS payments; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49878/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The person named submitted a 2017 Basic Payment/Areas of Natural Constraint schemes application on 9 May 2017. EU Regulations governing the administration of these schemes require that full and comprehensive administrative checks, including in some cases remote sensing (i.e. satellite) inspections, be completed before any payments issue.

The application of the person named was selected for a Remote Sensing eligibility inspection. Processing of this inspection necessitated the verification of the position on the ground by means of a field visit. This field visit has been completed and the full inspection results are currently being finalised, with the intention of issuing any payments due as soon as possible. In the event that any issue arises officials from my Department will make direct contact with the person named.

Flood Relief Schemes Applications

472. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Ma-

rine when the applications which were made to his Department for financial support as a result of the flooding in August 2017 will be paid; if all farmers will be paid the funds before Christmas 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49881/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The 2017 Flood Damage Relief Measure was implemented in response to the severe localised flooding experienced in the Inishowen area on 22 August 2017. The closing date for applications was 29 September.

The Department received 314 applications for financial aid. All eligible applications are subject to on farm verification and these reports are currently being finalised. Following this process it is expected that payments will commence shortly.

Coillte Teoranta Activities

473. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if a response to persons (details supplied) will be expedited; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49884/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Coillte was established as a private commercial company under the Forestry Act, 1988 and day-to-day operational matters, such as land transactions, are the responsibility of the company.

The matter was, however, raised with Coillte who advise that Coillte's property sales team have engaged with this individual a number of times on his request and are currently looking at possible ways to advance the request for a right of way. I am advised that the company will continue to update the individual concerned on progress and have outlined Coillte's sales process to him including the internal approvals required before a property transaction may be advanced.

Aquaculture Licence Applications

474. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of an application by a person (details supplied) for a licence for a hatchery; if a decision has been made on the requirement for an environmental impact assessment, EIA; if permission will be granted to the business to put in eggs in November or December 2017 and January 2018 while a decision is being made on the licence in order to avoid the loss of another year to the business; and if the matter will be expedited. [49885/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The application referred to by the Deputy is currently under consideration by my Department in accordance with the provisions of the 1997 Fisheries (Amendment) Act and related EU legislation.

The issue of whether or not an Environmental Impact Statement will be required from the applicant will be determined following a screening process currently underway by my Department in conjunction with the Marine Institute and Bord Iascaigh Mhara.

It is important to note that the applicable legislation prohibits an applicant or any person on behalf of the applicant from engaging in aquaculture at the place or waters to which the application relates before a licence is granted.

Every effort is being made to expedite the processing of the application having regard to the

complexities involved.

Vacancies on State Boards

475. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of vacancies in each State board under the aegis of his Department, in tabular form. [49928/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Of the 12 State Bodies under the aegis of my Department, a total of nine vacancies exist on the Boards of six of these Bodies. Details outlined in the table below. In line with normal practice, these vacancies are being/will be processed in accordance with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform “Guidelines on Appointments to State Boards”.

State Body	No. of Current Vacancies
Aquaculture Licensing Appeals Board	1
Bord Bia	2
Bord na gCon	1
Coillte	2
Irish National Stud	2
Marine Institute	1

Agri-Environment Options Scheme Applications

476. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if an application by a person (details supplied) for AEOS payments will be reviewed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49964/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The decision on payments under AEOS was issued by letter to the person named on 24 August 2016. The person named did not avail of the review procedure outlined at the time. My Department will review the correspondence now submitted and issue a response to the person named shortly.

Areas of Natural Constraint Scheme Funding

477. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the way in which the €25 million extra ANC funding that was allocated in budget 2018 will be distributed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49976/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The Areas of Natural Constraint (ANC) Scheme is a very important source of financial support for farmers across the country, paying over €200 million each year to some 95,000 farmers. Budget 2018 included an additional allocation of €25 million for the scheme in 2018. This is in keeping with provisions of the Programme for a Partnership Government.

There are a number of options in relation to how any additional funding could be allocated under the ANC scheme. These options range from allocating the funds as a flat increase across the current payable rates, to various forms of targeting higher payment rates for particular categories of farmers. The options in this regard are currently being examined. Any changes to the Scheme on foot of this will require agreement with the EU Commission via a formal amend-

ment of the Rural Development Programme, 2014-2020.

The 2017 ANC payments commenced on 19 September and to date over €192.6 million has been paid to almost 89,300 farmers. Payments are continuing on a rolling basis as more farmers satisfy eligibility and stocking rate requirements.

Animal Identification Schemes

478. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his plans to introduce an EID tagging system for sheep in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49977/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): My experiences leading recent trade missions to open up new markets indicate that the current National Sheep Identification System (NSIS) is a limiting factor in my Department's ongoing efforts to expand the export potential for Irish sheep meat. The expansion of export markets in the context of the uncertainty surrounding Brexit is critical in the continuing sustainability of the Irish sheep industry. In the light of the above I am currently examining the option of extending the use of electronic identification in sheep.

Appointments to State Boards Data

479. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the names of persons he has appointed to each State board under the aegis of his Department who have not come from the Public Appointments Service list of suitable candidates, in tabular form. [49990/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): There are 12 State Bodies under the aegis of my Department. In relation to six of the State Bodies, some of the board appointments are made by me on the basis of nominations from third-party organisations for specified vacancies, as set out in legislation. These State Bodies are the Aquaculture Licensing Appeals Board (ALAB), Bord Bia, Horse Racing Ireland (HRI), National Milk Agency, Teagasc and the Veterinary Council of Ireland. Appointments made by me to five of these Bodies, in this manner, are outlined below:

State Body	Name of Director
ALAB	Brendan Brice Owen McIntyre Jim Power
Bord Bia	John ComerJoe HealyCaroline KeelingMichael Carey
HRI	Robert NixonFrancis HylandBernard CaldwellNoel CloakeMichael Halford-John MoloneyJohn PowellHarry R.D. McCalmont
Teagasc	Richard KennedyThomas Cooke

In relation to the Irish National Stud, the Directors are replaced/reappointed on a rotational basis and remain in situ until replaced/reappointed. In October 2017, it was agreed by me and the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, that the Chairman and three Directors would be reappointed pending a review of the Article of Association of the Irish National Stud, which deals with the rotation of Directors. Details of these appointments are as follows:

State Body	Names of Directors
Irish National Stud	Sean Brady Matt Dempsey Seamus Boyle- John Tuite

In relation to Coillte, derogation from the Guidelines on Appointments to State Boards was granted by the previous Government in accordance in Section 9.3 of those Guidelines, to enable the appointment of a Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to the Board. In my capacity as Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine and with the consent of the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, I subsequently appointed the CEO to Coillte.

State Body	Name of Director
Coillte	Fergal Leamy

Animal Welfare

480. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the steps he will take in respect of coursing similar to his Department's policy to ban the use of animals for entertainment purposes at circuses in view of his Department's commitment to animal welfare and the recent video footage of hares being severely mauled at meetings (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50011/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Under the provisions of the Greyhound Industry Act, 1958 the regulation of coursing is chiefly a matter for the Irish Coursing Club (ICC). This is subject to the general control and direction of Bord na gCon, which is the statutory body with responsibility for the improvement and development of the greyhound industry, greyhound racing and coursing. The ICC has confirmed that it has systems in place to underpin the welfare of animals participating in coursing events. In particular hounds are muzzled to minimise injury.

The ICC requires that a veterinary surgeon and a control steward are present at all coursing meetings. In addition veterinary officials from my Department and Rangers from the National Parks and Wildlife Service (part of the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht) also monitor a number of meetings during the coursing season.

An example of the ICC's positive approach toward the issue was witnessed last week with the postponement of a meeting due to unfavourable weather conditions.

At the conclusion of the Ardpatrick and Kilfinane coursing meeting, all 66 participating hares were successfully released.

The Deputy can be assured that my Department will continue to carefully monitor the situation in order to ensure that coursing is run in a well controlled manner. I welcome the strong emphasis being placed on welfare issues at coursing meetings. I do not intend introducing a ban on hare coursing.

Food Harvest 2020 Strategy

481. **Deputy Michael Harty** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his views on whether achieving the objectives of Food 2020 Harvest is impossible, particularly in the dairy sector in view of EU demands on climate; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50029/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): In Ireland we are fortunate that there is a broad consensus between Government, farmers and industry in terms of the strategic direction of the agri-food sector; in terms of addressing the challenges it faces and taking advantage of the opportunities for Ireland as a top class producer of quality agri-food produce.

This vision has been formally set out in successive sector agreed blueprints for the overall Agri-Food sector, the two most recent being Food Harvest 2020 and Food Wise 2025.

The key target for the dairy sector in Food Harvest 2020 was to achieve a 50% increase in production by 2020 over the baseline of the 2007-2009 average. This target was shaped in the context of prospective quota abolition in 2015. It is likely that Ireland will achieve this Food Harvest 2020 target well ahead of schedule, driven by strong milk production growth in the post quota period.

Irish dairy farming sits alongside the best in the world in terms of food safety, traceability fundamentals and sustainable farming methods. Initiatives such as Origin Green and the Sustainable Dairy Assurance Scheme allow Ireland to demonstrably verify the sustainability credentials of the sector. The focus which such initiatives bring to bear on issues such as animal welfare, and care of the environment, has allowed us to create a competitive advantage in the ongoing development of a strong export-focused agri-food economy, including dairy.

Both Food Harvest 2020 and Food Wise 2025 were shaped and informed by a commitment to environmental sustainability. Food Wise rightly states that “environmental protection and economic competitiveness are equal and complementary: one will not be achieved at the expense of the other”. While obviously challenging, my Department, State agencies and the sector as a whole, are committed to that vision of sustainable growth, and are working to achieve it through implementation of the Food Wise sustainability recommendations and the Rural Development Programme agri-environmental supports.

Pesticide Use

482. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his plans to ban the use of glyphosate; the rationale for the reversal of the ban on pre-harvest spraying of crops in 2016; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50032/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The scientific assessments completed by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) and the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) concluded that glyphosate is unlikely to pose a carcinogenic hazard to humans and can be used safely without putting consumers or users at risk and therefore support the continued approval of glyphosate. This is in line with the approach of regulatory authorities throughout the world. My Department therefore supported the proposal from the European Commission for the re-approval of glyphosate for a period of five years. The proposal to renew the approval of glyphosate for a five year period received qualified majority support among EU Member States at a meeting to vote on approval of Glyphosate on the 27 November.

While the use of glyphosate as a pre-harvest desiccant does not pose a risk to consumers and is proven to be safe, my Department nonetheless disallowed this practice following the extension of the approval of glyphosate by the EU Commission in 2016. However, there are situations where perennial weeds may be controlled using glyphosate in standing cereal and oilseed crops. The decision by my Department to allow use in this circumstance is in line with the Commission recommendation forming part of the 2016 approval extension and was informed

by the implementation plans of other Member States,

My Department will continue to ensure that all glyphosate product authorisations in Ireland are in accordance with the recently agreed EU renewal decision.

Brexit Issues

483. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if Northern Ireland-based food companies seeking to develop new facilities here in order to mitigate against the threats posed by Brexit will be able to avail of SBCI reduced interest loans; the maximum funding which will be available to such companies; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50033/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): I believe that supporting lower-cost flexible finance is a key Government response to assist businesses in dealing with Brexit. I was therefore delighted to announce in the Budget that we are providing funding for a new Brexit Loan Scheme, which make up to €300 million of affordable, flexible financing available to Irish businesses that are either currently impacted by Brexit or who will be in the future. Given their unique exposure to the UK market, my Department's funding contribution ensures that at least 40% of this Scheme will be available to food businesses.

The new Scheme will be delivered by the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland (SBCI) through commercial lenders. SBCI issued an open call on 21 November inviting lending institutions to participate. The Scheme is expected to be in place in March 2018 and it is anticipated that it will remain open until March 2020.

SBCI advises that SMEs and small mid-cap businesses (up to 499 employees) based in the State will be eligible. They also advise that businesses not based in the State, but with their principal activities here, will be eligible.

Brexit Documents

484. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he has used a private email account to send or receive official documents or positions on Brexit; and if so, the details of this correspondence. [50051/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): I wish to inform the Deputy that I have not used a private email account to send or to receive official documents on Brexit.

Areas of Natural Constraint Scheme Data

485. **Deputy Martin Kenny** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of persons that received funds under the ANC scheme for fulfilling the mountain-type land criterion in 2015, 2016 and to date in 2017. [50079/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Please see below as requested the number of applicants paid under the Areas of Natural Constraint Scheme for fulfilling the mountain type land criterion in 2015, 2016 and to date in 2017. The 2017 figure is increasing weekly as more cases qualify for payment.

Year	2015	2016	2017 to date
Number of Herds Paid	30,398	29,920	27,447

Areas of Natural Constraint Scheme

486. **Deputy Martin Kenny** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if the number of persons receiving ANC payments for mountain-type lands is an indication of the percentage of persons farming on hill land here; and if these farms are bigger or smaller than the average farm size here. [50080/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): A total of 27,447 farmers applied for the Areas of Natural Constraint Scheme with land designated as 'mountain land' under the Scheme. The average amount of mountain lands held per applicant is 22.37 hectares, which is below the national average farm size of 32 hectare. However, these applicants may also hold other categories of land.

Departmental Bodies Data

487. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the bodies under the aegis his Department to which his Department provides in excess of €1 million funding per annum; the public funding received by these bodies; the bodies in which 50% or more of their income comes from public sources; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50107/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The information requested by the Deputy is shown below:

State Body	2017 REV Allocation €000	More than 50% of Income from Public Sources in 2016
Teagasc	128,130	Yes
Bord Bia	34,492	Yes
Marine Institute	31,563	Yes
Bord Iascaigh Mhara	44,088	Yes
Sea Fisheries Protection Agency	12,800	Yes
Horse and Greyhound Racing Fund	80,000	
Of which : Horse Racing Ireland	64,000	*No
Greyhound Racing Board	16,000	*No

*This is based on including Tote turnover as income. If income is defined as including Tote profit instead of including Tote turnover, then the percentage of income from public funds would exceed 50% for Horse Racing Ireland and Bord na gCon.

Stocking Densities

488. **Deputy Martin Kenny** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the statistics on the average stocking rate of farms located on mountain land here, including those that have qualified for ANC payments for meeting the mountain type criterion in each of the years 2015, 2016 and to date in 2017. [50227/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Please see below the statistics on the average stocking rate of farms containing land designated as ‘mountain land’ under the Areas of Natural Constraint Scheme for the years 2015, 2016 and to date in 2017.

Year	2015	2016	2017
Average stocking rate held - l/u per hectare	0.83	0.84	0.87

Agri-Environment Options Scheme Data

489. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of farmers enrolled in AEOS whose contracts will end in 2018, by county, in tabular form; if these persons were eligible to apply under tranche 3 of GLAS while still in an AEOS contract; if they were not eligible to join GLAS, the number of such persons that left AEOS contracts in order to join GLAS by the tranche 3 deadline; the number that stayed in AEOS by the tranche 3 deadline; if such persons will be permitted to join GLAS under a fourth round; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50232/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The number of participants currently in AEOS that have contracts due to end on 31 December 2018 is 2,253. A breakdown by county can be found below. All these AEOS participants were eligible to apply for GLAS 3. 3,464 AEOS 3 participants moved to GLAS 3.

There are no plans to reopen the GLAS scheme. The target set out in the Rural Development Programme 2014 - 2020 to approve 50,000 GLAS participants has been achieved. It is one of a suite of many RDP schemes and the reopening of any scheme can only be considered within the overall RDP budget which is currently fully committed.

Current AEOS 3 participants

County	No. of Participants
Carlow	8
Cavan	76
Clare	123
Cork	94
Donegal	321
Dublin	3
Galway	371
Kerry	171
Kildare	6
Kilkenny	20
Laois	19

County	No. of Participants
Leitrim	156
Limerick	53
Longford	18
Louth	14
Mayo	364
Meath	24
Monaghan	46
Offaly	23
Roscommon	139
Sligo	92
Tipperary	37
Waterford	21
Westmeath	31
Wexford	9
Wicklow	14
Total	2,253

Crop Losses

490. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of persons that applied to the crop loss compensation scheme by county, in tabular form; the number of approved applicants; the number of applicants that withdrew from the scheme; the number that have been issued payments to date, by county. [50233/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The crop loss support measure was launched in July to assist growers most affected by the wet weather harvest conditions of September 2016. A total of 167 applications were received under the measure.

The first tranche of payments under the measure has now been processed and payments will arrive in bank accounts later this week. In a large number of cases, further information or clarification is required in order to fully process applications. In all of these cases, the applicants have been contacted directly by an official from my Department. As the further information requested is received, these cases will be examined again and subsequent pay runs will be put in place as more cases are cleared for payment.

The figures requested on a county basis are set out in the table below.

County	Number of Applicants	Paid	Withdrawn
Cork	86	19	1
Donegal	25	7	0
Galway	23	8	0
Kerry	7	1	0
Kilkenny	1	1	0
Longford	4	1	0
Louth	2	0	0
Mayo	4	2	0
Meath	1	1	0

County	Number of Applicants	Paid	Withdrawn
Roscommon	7	1	0
Tipperary	4	2	0
Waterford	1	0	0
Wexford	2	2	0
	167	45	1

Recreational Angling Sector

491. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the potential impact the proposed ban on recreational angling for bass fishing for the first six months of 2018 and only catch-and-release fishing for the following six months will have on local tourism (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50305/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): I also share the concern of your constituent with regards to the current proposal for sea bass from the European Commission as part of the Fishing Opportunities Proposal for 2018. Ireland has been to the forefront in protecting the vulnerable Sea bass stock for many years with a complete prohibition on commercial fishing in place since 1990.

Our recreational sector, the policy responsibility for which lies with the Department of Communications, Climate Action and the Environment (DCCAE), is very important to us from a tourism point of view. Recreational sea bass angling is carefully managed and monitored by Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) and the angling community themselves. Ireland is of the view the proposal to prohibit any recreational fishing for sea bass is a step in the wrong direction and would result in loss of valuable data that is gathered under the catch and release arrangements that is needed to support protection and rebuilding of this stock.

We have already communicated our opposition to this aspect to the Commission proposal on sea bass and will, in consultation with DCCAE, IFI and the Marine Institute, continue to make this case strenuously.

Basic Payment Scheme Payments

492. **Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when payment of the basic farm payment will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Cork. [50331/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The person named submitted a 2016 Transfer of Entitlements application to my Department seeking the transfer of entitlements by sale as Transferee. There are outstanding issues pertaining to the sale of these entitlements and my Department has issued letters to the seller of the entitlements seeking additional documentation which is required to process the transfer to the person named. To date, this additional information has not been submitted. Following receipt of the requested information my Department will process this Transfer of Entitlements application.

Harbours and Piers Maintenance

493. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the

resources his Department has devoted to the removal of abandoned boats around the coast; the powers local authorities have to force owners to remove such boats; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50354/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): My Department has responsibility under the Fishery Harbours Centre Act, 1968 (as amended) for the six Fishery Harbour Centres located at Howth, Dunmore East, Castletownbere, An Daingean, Ros an Mhíl and Killybegs. The Fishery Harbour Centres (Management, Control, Operation and Development) Bye-Laws 1979 give the Harbour Master powers to remove wrecked or derelict vessels from the confines of these six Fishery Harbour Centres. This is a rare occurrence and monies are made available when necessary on a case by case basis.

The Receiver of wrecks, who is a Revenue Official appointed by the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, also has a role in respect of any wrecks found in or on the shores of the sea or any tidal water or harbour.

The Deputy will be aware that there is other State owned harbour infrastructure around the coast that does not fall within the remit of my Department. I would therefore suggest that the Deputy contact the relevant public body with responsibility for these, including the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport in respect of State port companies and the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government in respect of ports or harbours managed by local authorities.

Agriculture Scheme Payments

494. **Deputy Eugene Murphy** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of remote sensing eligibility satellite inspections that were carried out in counties Roscommon and Galway to date in 2017, in tabular form; the number of inspections in which results are still outstanding; the number of cases in which payments under the basic payment or areas of natural constraint schemes are still outstanding due to a delay in results of these satellite inspections; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50358/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): EU regulations governing the Basic Payment Scheme, the Areas of Natural Constraints Scheme and other area-based schemes require that full and comprehensive administrative checks, including Ground or Remote Sensing inspections where completed, are fully completed before any payments are issued. My Department is required to undertake inspections on at least 5% of applicants and cases can be selected for inspection under more than one scheme.

The following table details the current position on cases selected for a 2017 Remote Sensing inspection in Counties Galway and Roscommon:

County	No. of 2017 Remote Sensing (RS) Inspections	No. of Cases - RS Inspection Results Received	No. of Cases - RS Inspection Results Awaited	No. of Eligible BPS Applicants subject to RS Inspection	No. of Eligible BPS Applicants subject to RS Inspection - Paid	No. of Eligible ANC Applicants subject to RS Inspection	No. of Eligible ANC Applicants subject to RS Inspection - Paid
Galway	460	454 (99%)	6	448	416	447	395
Roscommon	267	261 (98%)	6	259	235	260	216

Outstanding cases continue to be finalised, on a daily basis, through the inspection and payment stage process, subject to scheme specific eligibility criteria being met, e.g. ANC stocking density requirements.

Departmental Contracts Data

495. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the public contracts between his Department and companies (details supplied) in each of the years 2011 to 2016, inclusive; the value of each contract; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50393/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): I wish to advise the Deputy that it is not possible to provide the information requested in the required time. A detailed reply will issue in the coming week.

Fisheries Protection

496. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine further to Parliamentary Question No. 361 of 14 November 2017, his Department's protocol for advising the SFPA of reports of illegal fishing boats in Irish waters; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50431/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): As the Deputy is aware, the monitoring and control of fishing vessels within Ireland's Exclusive Fisheries Zone are matters for the Irish control authorities. Under the Sea-Fisheries and Maritime Jurisdiction Act 2006, all operational issues of this nature concerning sea-fisheries control are, as a matter of law, exclusively for the Sea Fisheries Protection Authority (SFPA) and the Naval Service. I am precluded from getting involved in operational matters including in relation to law enforcement.

I should advise the Deputy that, whereas issues of a general nature concerning sea fisheries control are brought to the attention of my Department from time to time, my Department rarely receives information concerning specific allegations of alleged illegal fishing within the Exclusive Fishery Zone. In the event that such specific allegations are brought to the attention of my Department, the arrangement is to refer the matter to the SFPA/Naval Service for attention and any action they consider appropriate as the relevant control authorities.

European Maritime and Fisheries Fund

497. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the financial supports available for those who lost fishing equipment due to recent storm damage; the way in which a person can apply for financial assistance in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50432/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): My Department's €240 million European Maritime and Fisheries Fund Operational Programme is the vehicle for financial supports to the seafood sector up to 2021. The Programme delivers a wide range of supports for aquaculture, fisheries and seafood processing through a suite of 15 schemes.

The EMFF Regulation provides for a special compensation scheme for fishermen experiencing significant economic losses arising from severe storms etc. Article 35 foresees the establishment by fishermen of a 'Mutual Fund for Adverse Climatic Events and Environmental Incidents'. This Fund would act as a form of mutual insurance for otherwise uninsurable losses, by paying compensation to affiliated fishermen for losses that exceed 30% of the fisherman's

annual turnover arising from severe storms and other adverse climatic events, losses arising from environmental incidents and for the costs of rescue at sea for fishermen or fishing vessels.

The Fund must be established and managed by fishermen and be funded through the subscriptions of affiliated fishermen. The compensation would only be available to fishermen affiliated to the Fund. Support to the Fund from the EMFF Programme would be in the form of a contribution to the costs of compensation paid out by the Fund. Depending on the type of vessels or fishermen experiencing losses, EMFF assistance may be up to 80%.

My Department and BIM stand ready to assist and advise fishermen and their representatives in establishing the Fund, but the EMFF does not permit a financial contribution towards the costs of establishment or management of the Fund.

This Mutual Fund is the vehicle envisaged in the EMFF Regulation for storm damage compensation, and all available funds are allocated to the EMFF Programme.

Agrifood Sector

498. **Deputy Frank O'Rourke** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the criteria used for selection of Fermoy, Cork, as the centre for the new National Food Innovation Hub as opposed to other locations; the strategies subsequently in place to promote the agrifood business nationwide with specific reference to strategies for north County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50434/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The primary objective of the National Food Innovation Hub is to create a business innovation network at Moorepark involving dairy companies, Moorepark Technology Ltd (MTL), incubator companies and public-private partnership based R&D programmes with a research focus on food processing, quality and nutrition. It involves constructing up to 12 customer application suites containing office and laboratory space, so that each company can have an on-campus presence at Moorepark to conduct new-product development etc.

Developing the National Food Innovation Hub at Moorepark will promote greater collaboration between industry and public research, and deliver a step change in innovation activity in the food industry. It responds to increasing demand from dairy and food companies to co-locate their own staff at Moorepark to utilise MTL facilities and collaborate with Teagasc research staff, which requires additional laboratory, office and ancillary space.

The National Food Innovation Hub will be directly linked to both the Teagasc Food Research Centre and MTL to engender close collaboration between the research centres and the companies located on the Moorepark campus. It is envisaged that this unique food cluster will stimulate intensive collaboration between companies and Teagasc researchers to create a platform for innovation, economic growth and job creation.

In addition, a wide range of modern food processing facilities and equipment is available to food businesses at Moorepark including a pilot plant facility operated by MTL, which contains up-to-date and versatile pilot scale processing equipment. With regard to developing the wider agri-food sector, Food Wise 2025, the ten year strategy published in July 2015, identifies the opportunities and challenges facing the entire sector and provides an enabling strategy that will allow it to grow and prosper at local, regional and national level.

It includes more than 350 separate recommendations for actions, spread across cross-cutting themes of sustainability, human capital, market development, innovation and competitiveness.

My Department is committed to a robust implementation process which will drive implementation of the Food Wise recommendations. The implementation process is driven by a High Level Implementation Committee, which I chair.

Agriculture Scheme Payments

499. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when ANC and BPS payments will issue to a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50443/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The person named submitted a 2017 Transfer of Entitlements application to my Department seeking the transfer of entitlements by Gift as Transferee. The application has been deemed to be successful and the person named has been notified in writing. Payment under the Basic Payment Scheme will issue shortly.

Departmental Websites

500. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his plans to update his Department's website to include certified objects that qualify for grant aid under TAMS (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50448/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The Department's website has been updated.

It is a matter for applicants who apply for grant aid under the TAMS II Schemes to ensure that the suppliers of specific construction materials such as the beams and steel used to construct their new buildings are on the Department's approved list before they undertake the work.

Comprehensive details of the specifications and approved suppliers are available on the Department's website.

Fishery Harbour Centres

501. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will address a matter (details supplied) regarding a folio; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50480/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): My Department first became aware of this issue in September. The matters raised are complex conveyancing issues centred on establishing ownership of a piece of land bordering Castletownbere Fishery Harbour Centre. My officials are progressing the matter through the appropriate channels. However, there are a number of potential stakeholders and as with all legal property matters of this nature, resolution may take some time.

TAMS Applications

502. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when the next tranche of TAMS applications will be released to the local offices; and if he will make

a statement on the matter. [50496/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The applications received in Tranche 8 of the TAMS II Scheme are being processed and released to the local office on an ongoing basis. It is a requirement of the Scheme that all applications received in a given tranche must go through a ranking and selection process before approval and this process is underway.

Departmental Contracts Data

503. **Deputy Eugene Murphy** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the fee paid by his Department to contract companies to carry out remote sensing eligibility satellite inspections, by county, in tabular form in 2016 and to date in 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50517/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The Remote Sensing (Satellite) inspection process involves the processing of a large range of satellite imagery received at various stages throughout the year. Each case selected for inspection is then comprehensively reviewed using this imagery to ensure that the claimed area in the application form corresponds to the area farmed by the applicant, that the different crop types are as claimed and that eligible land or features are included for payment purposes. Where it is not possible to make an accurate determination on the eligibility of a parcel or parcels of land by means of an assessment of the available imagery, a field visit must be undertaken to verify the position on the ground.

Payments by my Department to carry out Remote Sensing inspections in respect of the 2016 and 2017 scheme years totalled €1.127m for 2016 and €0.947m for 2017 to date. Payments are not made on a county basis.

Felling Licences Applications

504. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of a forestry application and appeal by a person (details supplied). [50572/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): My Department received a General Felling Licence application on 5th February 2016, for 2.14ha of forestry, from the person named.

Upon examination of the application it was ascertained that the applicant did not wish to replant the land, which is a condition of all General Felling Licences. Where it was not intended to replant the actual parcel of land the subject of the felling licence, a Limited Felling Licence application was the appropriate form to submit. However, the forest owner would still have been obliged to replant an equivalent area.

The applicant was advised in writing on 16th June 2016 that the application for a General Felling Licence would not be granted as he did not wish to replant the felled area. He was also informed that should he wish to proceed with the proposed felling, it was more appropriate to apply for a Limited Felling Licence and an alternative area to be replanted in lieu of that to be felled should be proposed in the application. The application forms for a Limited Felling Licence were included with the letter.

My Department did not receive any application for a Limited Felling Licence, nor did they

receive an appeal. The General Felling Licence application is closed.

Since this original application, the Forestry Act 2014 was commenced. Therefore, if the applicant wishes to fell the trees in question, an application for a Tree Felling Licence must be made. However, it must be reiterated that the land which is the subject of the felling licence application or an equivalent area will still require to be replanted under the 2014 Act.

Flood Relief Schemes Data

505. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of farmers impacted by severe flooding in County Donegal in August 2017 that applied to his Department for direct financial aid for losses (details supplied); the number of farmers that have been issued payments to date. [50672/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The 2017 Flood Damage Relief Measure was implemented in response to the severe localised flooding experienced in the Inishowen area on August 22nd 2017. The closing date for applications was September 29th.

314 applications for financial aid were received which are broken down into the following categories.

-	Category	Number of applications
Category 1	loss of livestock	40
Category 2	loss of conserved fodder	61
Category 3	Clean up of damaged Agricultural land	246
Category 4	Repairs to fencing	263

All eligible applications are subject to on farm verification and these reports are currently being finalised. Following this process it is expected that payments will commence shortly.

Foireann Roinne

506. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Talmhaíochta, Bia agus Mara cén líon iomlán foirne atá fostaithe ina Roinn faoi láthair; cé mhéid post atá daingnithe nó aitheanta ag an Roinn (i scéim teanga, nó ar aon bhealach eile) mar phoist a bhfuil riachtanas Gaeilge ag baint leo; cé mhéid duine atá ann ag a bhfuil líofacht i nGaeilge agus atá ag feidhmiú sna poist sin atá daingnithe nó aitheanta mar phoist a bhfuil riachtanas Gaeilge ag baint leo; an bhfuil sé beartaithe ag an tráth seo aon phost eile de chuid na Roinne a aithint mar phoist a bhfuil riachtanas Gaeilge. [50674/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Tá 3,111 fostaithe lán ama (FTE) sa Roinn faoi lathair 20/11/2017.

Laistigh do mo Roinn féin tá (6) ionad atá oiriúnach do poist datheangach.

Tá cúig post dátheangach líonta ach tá foluntas amháin fós le líonadh. Thit sé seo amach mar tá fadhb ag an Roinn Oifigeach Feidhmiúcháin dátheangach ar fail. Is mór an trua an scéal seo.

Tuigim go bhfuil an Roinn ag iarraidh an fadhb a réiteach faoi lathair leis An Roinn Cultuir Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta. Tá mé dóchasach go mbeidh said in ann teach ar réiteach I gcomhar leis an tSeirbhís Um Cheapachain Phoinlí (PAS).

Ní choiméadann an Roinn aon cuntas oifigiúil do caighdeán an teanga Gaeilge I measc na duine ata fostaithe sa Roinn.

Níl aon phoist éile dhatheangach a phlé san am seo ag an Roinn.

Foireann Roinne

507. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Talmhaíochta, Bia agus Mara cé mhéid folúntas a líonadh ina Roinn ó thús na bliana seo; cé mhéid de na folúntais sin a bhain le poist a bhí sainaitheanta mar phoist a raibh Gaeilge riachtanach ina leith; cé mhéid folúntas atá le líonadh faoi lathair agus cé mhéid de na folúntais siúd atá sainaitheanta mar fholúntais a bhfuil riachtanas Gaeilge ag baint leo. [50691/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Is iad seo a leanas foluntais ata líonta i mbliana ag Roinn Talamhaíochta Bia Agus Mara ón Chead lá d'Eanáir go dtí 20Ú la Samhain 2017.

432 Iomlán

Seo an briseadh síos don uimhir sin. 139 ardú ceime don foireann fostaithe ag an Roinn hana fein. 194 Iarrthoiri nua ag teacht isteach don seirbhís Poiblí daon chead uair agus an 99 deanta suas do dhuine a aistriú ó Roinn éile eagsúla. Níl fostaithe sealadach tógadh san airaimh.

Faoi lathair tá (6) post dátheangach sa Roinn, Tá cúig post dátheangach líonta ach tá foluntas amhaín fós le líonadh. Thit sé seo amach mar tá fadhb ag an Roinn Oififeach Feidhmiúcháin dátheangach ar fail. Is mór an trua an scéal seo.

Tuigim go bhfuil an Roinn ag iarraidh an fadhb a réiteach faoi lathair leis An Roinn Cultuir Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta. Tá mé dóchasach go mbeidh said in ann teach ar réiteach I gcomhar leis an tSeirbhís Um Cheapachain Phoinlí (PAS).

Broadband Service Provision

508. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the expected roll-out of broadband under the national broadband plan to homes at a location (details supplied) in County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49872/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): The Government's National Broadband Plan (NBP) aims to ensure 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 today over 65% of the 2.3m premises in Ireland have access to high speed broadband and this is set to increase to 77% (1.8m premises) by the end of 2018 and to 90% (2.1m premises) by the end of 2020.

In April of this year, I published an updated High Speed Broadband Map which is available at www.broadband.gov.ie. The map shows the areas targeted by commercial operators to pro-

vide high speed broadband services and the areas that will be included in the State Intervention Area under the NBP. The Map is searchable by Eircode/address and is colour coded:

- AMBER areas represent the target areas for the proposed State led Intervention under the NBP and are the subject of an ongoing procurement process.

- BLUE represent those areas where commercial providers are either currently delivering, or have plans to deliver high speed broadband services.

- Light BLUE areas represent eir's commercial rural deployment plans to roll out high speed broadband to 300,000 premises by the end of 2018 as part of an Agreement signed with me in April.

The map shows that there are 140 premises in the townland of Fountainstown, County Cork, of which 137 fall within the AMBER area and will require State Intervention. The remaining 3 premises fall within the BLUE area and will be covered by commercial operators. Individuals can themselves check whether their premises is in a BLUE or an AMBER area by accessing the High Speed Broadband Map and entering their 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 in the State intervention area. That procurement process is now at an advanced stage. The "Detailed Solutions" submitted by two bidders on 26th September are being evaluated by the NBP specialist team. The next stage in the procurement process is the receipt of final tenders followed by the appointment of a preferred bidder(s) and contract signature. As part of this procurement process, the bidder(s) will be required to submit their strategies, including timescales and plans to priority areas, for the network build and rollout.

I recognise the importance of availability of high speed connectivity for all premises in Ireland and the frustration for communities that do not currently have access to this level of connectivity. Delivering connectivity to the 542,000 premises (including the 137 premises in Fountainstown) that fall within the State led intervention under the NBP remains a Government priority and my Department will engage with the winning bidder(s) to ensure the most efficient deployment as part of the contract.

In the interim, practical initiatives will continue to be addressed through the work of the Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce to address obstacles and improve connectivity in respect of existing and future mobile phone and broadband services.

Under this Taskforce, engagement between telecommunications operators and local authorities through the Broadband Officers is continuing to strengthen. These Broadband Officers are acting as single points of contact in local authorities for their communities. The appointment of these officers is already reaping rewards in terms of ensuring a much greater degree of consistency in engagements with operators and clearing obstacles to developing infrastructure. There is a link to a list of these local Broadband Officers on my Department's website.

Internet Safety

509. **Deputy Alan Farrell** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his views on the establishment of a digital safety commissioner, as recommended by the Law Reform Commission; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49890/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis

Naughten): As the Deputy will be aware through his work as Chair of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Children and Youth Affairs, which is currently considering the subject of online safety for children and young adults, the issue of online safety is of vital interest and importance to citizens. It is also a complex area that straddles the responsibilities of many Departments.

There have been a number of reports on this topic, most notably the Internet Content Governance Advisory Group's report from 2014, and the Law Reform Commission's report on *Harmful Communications and Digital Safety* published in September 2016. There have also been a number of initiatives at European level which are of specific relevance to this area, including the European Commission's *Code of Conduct on Countering Illegal Hate Speech* in 2016 and its more recent Communication in September 2017 titled *Tackling Illegal Content Online - Towards an enhanced responsibility of online platforms*.

Given the cross-cutting nature of online safety, I held a meeting on Tuesday 21 November with my colleagues, the Minister for Justice and Equality and the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs. It was agreed at that meeting that an Open Policy Debate, to be held in early 2018, would be the most appropriate way to progress this matter.

My Department will lead this initiative in cooperation with the Departments of Justice and Equality and Children and Youth Affairs and other relevant Departments. My Department will be engaging with the relevant online platforms to ensure their full participation in the initiative, and will also invite parents' groups and other key stakeholders to take part. A key objective of the Open Policy Debate will be to raise awareness in respect of the actions which are already taking place in this area at an Irish and European level, and identify any gaps which need to be addressed.

Vacancies on State Boards

510. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the number of vacancies in each State board under the aegis of his Department, in tabular form. [49931/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): There are currently 8 vacancies on State boards under the aegis of my Department, the details of which are set out in the table below.

State Board	Existing vacancies as at 24 November 2017
Inland Fisheries Ireland	1
Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI)	1
RTÉ	1
Digital Hub Development Agency (DHDA)*	5
Total Vacancies	8

* It is not proposed to fill some of the vacancies outstanding on the DHDA Board given current proposals to merge DHDA with DCC.

Appointments to State Boards Data

511. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Ac-

tion and Environment the names of persons he has appointed to each State board under the aegis of his Department who have not come from the Public Appointments Service list of suitable candidates, in tabular form. [49993/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): Appointments to State boards under the aegis of my Department include Ministerial appointments, reappointments, appointments of Elected Employee Representatives and appointments of ex-officio directors (CEOs). All appointments made by me since taking office have been made in accordance with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform Guidelines on Appointments to State Boards. Where a list of candidates has been presented to me by the Public Appointments Service, I have always selected candidates for appointment from that list.

Inland Fisheries Ireland Staff

512. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the number of staff employed by Inland Fisheries Ireland to work in County Mayo; the number of staff working in each area of the county; the number of staff employed in County Mayo in each of the years from 2012 to 2016 and to date in 2017; the number of staff employed to work in the areas of Carra, Lough Mask, Corrib and Cong, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50008/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Seán Kyne): The staff complement of Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) at the beginning of 2012 was 341 (FTE), in overall terms; and by the end of quarter 3 of 2017, the IFI staff complement was 297.

In terms of fisheries management and operational efficiency, IFI do not deploy staff on an individual county basis. Deployment is largely based on river catchments which very often are not confined to one county. The Western River Basin District also encompasses County Galway.

However, the overall numbers of IFI staff stationed in bases located in County Mayo in the relevant years is summarised in the following table.

Mayo	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012
Permanent	37	37	36	37	39	42
Seasonal	7	6	8	8	6	7
Research Contract	1	0	0	0	0	0
Total	45	43	44	45	45	49

Within the IFI staffing complement in the Western River Basin District, the numbers of staff based on the Western Lakes over the six years are as set out in the following table.

Area	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012
Lough Carra	0	0	0	0	0	0
Lough Mask	3	3	3	3	3	5

Area	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012
Lough Corrib	8	9	9	10	11	12
Cong Hatchery	2	2	2	2	2	2

While no staff are based specifically at Lough Carra, IFI staff regularly work in the Carra catchment.

Media Mergers

513. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the progress that has been made to establish a commission on the future of the media; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50036/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): The Media Mergers process was created as a result of amendments made to the Competition Act 2002 by the Competition & Consumer Protection Act 2014. All media mergers must be notified to me as Minister and I must make a determination whether or not the proposed media merger may proceed based on an assessment of its impact on the plurality of media in the State.

The examinations of all previous proposed media mergers conducted by my Department are available on my Department's website, as are a number of supplementary materials and a FAQ page concerning the media mergers process.

The amendments to the Competition Act also require the BAI to prepare a report every three years which describes the ownership and control arrangements for media businesses in the State; describes changes to ownership and control arrangements over the previous three years, and analyses the effect of those changes on the plurality of media in the State.

The first such report "Report on Ownership and Control of Media Businesses in Ireland 2012-2014" is also available on my Department's website. Preparatory work on the second such report by the BAI for the period 2015-2017 will commence in the new year.

Given the robust oversight in place, I have no plans to establish a commission on the future of the media.

Ministerial Communications

514. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he has used a private e-mail account to send or receive official documents or positions on Brexit; and, if so, the details of this correspondence. [50054/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): I wish to inform the Deputy that I use both my Department and Oireachtas e-mail accounts for work purposes. I do not use an unsecured account to receive or send official business e-mails on any subject.

Broadband Service Provision

515. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he will request a company (details supplied) to provide broadband as per the initial agreement in County Westmeath; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50073/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): The Government's National Broadband Plan (NBP) aims to ensure 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 1.5m or 65% of the 2.3m premises in Ireland can get access to high speed broadband and this is set to increase to 77% (1.8m premises) by the end of 2018 and to 90% (2.1m premises) by the end of 2020.

In April of this year, I published an updated High Speed Broadband Map which is available at www.broadband.gov.ie. The map shows the areas targeted by commercial operators to provide high speed broadband services and the areas that will be included in the State Intervention Area under the NBP.

The Map is searchable by Eircode/address and is colour coded:

- AMBER areas represent the target areas for the proposed State led Intervention under the NBP and are the subject of an ongoing procurement process.

- BLUE represent those areas where commercial providers are either currently delivering, or have plans to deliver high speed broadband services.

- Light BLUE areas represent eir's commercial rural deployment plans to rollout high speed broadband to 300,000 premises by the end of 2018, as part of an Agreement signed with me in April.

While the premises referenced in the Question falls within an AMBER area and will be covered through the State led Intervention under the NBP, I understand from communications between the company and officials from my Department that the company referenced is currently in discussion with two telecommunications operators with a view to obtaining a high speed broadband service.

My Department is in a formal procurement process to select a company or companies who will roll-out a new high speed broadband network in the State intervention area. That procurement process is now at an advanced stage. "Detailed Solutions" submitted by two bidders on 26th September are being evaluated by the NBP specialist team. The next stage in the procurement process is the receipt of final tenders followed by the appointment of a preferred bidder(s) and contract signature.

As part of this procurement process, the bidder(s) will be required to submit their strategies, including timescales, for the network build and rollout. Delivering connectivity to the 542,000 premises that fall within the State led intervention under the NBP remains a Government priority and my Department will engage with the winning bidder(s) to ensure the most efficient deployment as part of the contract.

I recognise the importance of availability of high speed connectivity for all premises in Ireland and the frustration for communities and businesses that do not currently have access to this level of connectivity. Delivering connectivity to the 542,000 premises (including more than 11,000 premises in County Westmeath) that fall within the State led intervention under the NBP remains a Government priority and my Department will engage with the winning bidder(s) to ensure the most efficient deployment as part of the contract.

In the interim, practical initiatives will continue to be addressed through the work of the Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce to address obstacles and improve connectivity in respect of existing and future mobile phone and broadband services.

Under this Taskforce, engagement between telecommunications operators and local authorities through the Broadband Officers is continuing to strengthen. Local Broadband Officers act as single points of contact in local authorities for their communities. The appointment of these officers is already reaping rewards in terms of ensuring a much greater degree of consistency in engagements with operators and clearing obstacles to developing infrastructure. A complete list of Local Broadband Officers is available on my Department's website.

Departmental Bodies Data

516. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the bodies under the aegis of his Department to which the Department provides in excess of €1 million funding per annum; the public funding received by these bodies; the bodies in which 50% or more of their income comes from public sources; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50110/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): The information requested by the Deputy in relation to the bodies under the aegis of my Department which were allocated in excess of €1m funding from my Department's Vote in 2017 is set out in the following table.

Body/Organisation	Amount	Public Funding Details(based on 2016 Accounts)
Raidió Teilifís Éireann (RTÉ)	€198.724m	RTÉ received in excess of 50% of its income from public sources in 2016
TG4	€33.71m	TG4 received in excess of 50% of its income from public sources in 2016
Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (Broadcasting Fund)	€14.704m	Exchequer funding is allocated in respect of the Broadcasting Fund managed by BAI. BAI's operational expenditure is funded by way of a levy on the broadcasting sector.
Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI)	€113.871m	SEAI received in excess of 50% of its income from public sources in 2016
Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI)	€26.578m	IFI received in excess of 50% its income from the public sources in 2016
Loughs Agency	€2.705m	The Loughs Agency is a North/South implementation body funded on a 50:50 basis with the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, Northern Ireland

Body/Organisation	Amount	Public Funding Details(based on 2016 Accounts)
Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)	€31.509m	The EPA received more than 50% of the income from the public sources in 2016
Digital Hub Development Agency	€1.676m	The Digital Hub Development Agency received less than 50% of its income from the public sources in 2016

In addition, there is an allocation of €12.457m in my Department's 2017 Vote for payment of commission to An Post in connection with the collection of TV licence fees.

Post Office Network

517. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the details of the recent approval to provide €30 million of funding to protect the future of the post office network and the continuation of a five-day week postal delivery service, in particular regarding key performance indicators; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50124/17]

520. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the position regarding his investment plans for the post office network (details supplied); the timeframe for their introduction; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50389/17]

523. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment further to his statement on 21 November 2017 (details supplied) if this type of community banking is linked in with the model (details supplied) of public banking in Germany. [50521/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): I propose to take Questions Nos. 517, 520 and 523 together.

As I indicated to the House last week, the Government has agreed to make €30m available in State funding to An Post. The funds will be provided by way of a long term loan advanced from the Exchequer. The €30m will be used to support the renewal of the post office network (€15m) and the continued fulfilment of a 5 day per week mails delivery service (€15m). The €30m funding will be subject to stringent conditions and Key Performance Indicators, the delivery of which will be monitored on a monthly basis by the parent Departments and NewERA. The specifics of these conditions and KPIs are currently being finalised between all parties.

The funding will be used to underpin the delivery of An Post's Strategic Plan. The proposed strategy for An Post will involve splitting the company into two distinct business units, An Post Mails and Parcels and An Post Retail. Improved profitability will be targeted through growth, pricing and cost reduction strategies. A sustainable, modern and vibrant network for the future, capable of adapting to the changing environment in which it operates, is envisaged. The Strategic Plan sets out a positive vision for the company, positions it for the digital age and aims to put the company in a position where it can support sustainable jobs in both the mails business and post office network right across the country.

In relation to the banking issue 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. While last week's Government Decision also formally transferred responsibility for the Post Office Network back to my Department, officials from the Department of Rural and Community Development have been actively working with the Department of Finance to progress this Programme for a Partnership Government commitment and will continue to deal with this matter. I am advised that a project team was assembled earlier this year involving officials from both of these Departments to consider the matter. In addition, a public consultation process, seeking views on the community banking model, was launched in early March and ran for four weeks. A total of 16 replies from a range of stakeholders were received. Officials from both Departments also met representatives from the International Sparkasse Foundation to learn more about the model. I understand that the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Department of Finance officials are now finalising their report and this report will be submitted to both Ministers shortly for consideration.

Energy Resources

518. **Deputy Frank O'Rourke** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the policy regarding Ireland's dependency on oil; the contingency plans in place in the event of energy supply disruptions; the actions or measures being taken to reduce Ireland's dependency on oil, specifically in terms of energy provision to publicly funded buildings, such as educational institutions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50125/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): Ireland holds 90 days of emergency oil stocks, in accordance with International Energy Agency (IEA) rules and EU legislation, to be used in the event of a supply disruption. The National Oil Reserves Agency (NORA) is responsible for acquiring and managing Ireland's emergency oil stocks.

The majority of these stocks are held in Ireland, with some stocks held in other EU Member States. Ireland has entered into bilateral agreements with those Member States within which our stocks are stored, thereby ensuring the repatriation to Ireland of this stock in the event of an oil disruption.

In the event of an electricity or gas emergency, ESB Networks and Gas Networks Ireland, the respective network operators, have detailed operational plans in place to deal with any disruption to energy supplies. These emergency plans are regularly reviewed and tested to ensure efficient emergency management in the event of a major disruption to supplies.

In addition to emergency planning, the transition to renewable energy sources and increasing energy efficiency have key roles in enhancing Ireland's energy security. The Government has a range of policy measures and schemes in place and under development designed to stimulate further progress in the domestic renewable energy sector. Existing schemes include the Renewable Energy Feed-in Tariff (REFIT) schemes for the electricity sector and the Biofuel Obligation Scheme in transport sector, and my Department is also currently developing a new Renewable Electricity Support Scheme and a Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) Scheme, designed to encourage further investment in the renewable electricity and heat sectors, respectively.

Under Ireland's National Energy Efficiency Action Plan (NEEAP), a particular focus has been assigned to public service buildings with a target of a 33% efficiency target. The most recent SEAI report on energy efficiency achievement by public sector bodies to end 2015 shows almost 21% energy efficiency was achieved – equating to an avoided energy spend in 2015 of €154m. More detail, including the energy use breakdowns are available in the Annual Report 2016 on Public Sector Energy Efficiency Performance – available online. This year I published the first Public Sector Energy Efficiency Strategy which provides the framework and impetus to support the public sector to build on progress to date in pursuit of the 33% target. My Department has been working with other Departments providing leadership and support to them to implement the Strategy. There are a wide range of measures and initiatives supporting the NEEAP that help improve energy efficiency and reduce energy use, thereby reducing import dependency – including pilot initiatives introduced this year. The Schools Pilot Retrofit Project saw 10 schools undertake medium to deep energy retrofit and reducing energy costs by 36% on average.

Broadband Service Provision

519. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment when broadband will go live in an area (details supplied) in view of the fact that the physical infrastructure has now been rolled out; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50305/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): The Government's National Broadband Plan (NBP) aims to ensure 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 today over 65% of the 2.3m premises in Ireland have access to high speed broadband and this is set to increase to 77% (1.8m premises) by the end of 2018 and to 90% (2.1m premises) by the end of 2020.

In April 2017 I signed a Commitment Agreement with eir in relation to its plans to provide broadband to an additional 300,000 premises in rural areas on a commercial basis. A copy of the Commitment Agreement is available on my Department's website www.dccae.gov.ie. The townland referenced in the Question comprises around 17 premises all of which form parts of this deployment.

Whilst the full programme of work is due to be completed by the end of 2018, more precise information on the timeframe for rollout is available from eir's website on <http://www.fiberroll-out.ie>. Information on eir's planned rural deployment is available from eir at <http://fiberrollout.ie/eircode-lookup/>. Citizens can access this website to determine the connectivity availability status for their premises using their eircode. The website also provides a list of retail service providers who offer services using high speed fibre network in the area.

I recognise the importance of availability of high speed connectivity for all premises in Ireland and the frustration for communities that do not currently have access to this level of connectivity. Delivering connectivity under the NBP remains a Government priority. My Department is in regular contact with eir in relation to the Commitment Agreement and will continue this engagement with the aim of ensuring the requirements of the Commitment Agreement are met.

Quarterly updates on progress of eir's 300k rollout will continue to be published on my Department's website available at <http://www.dccae.gov.ie/documents/County%20Statistics>.

pdf which includes a full set of county statistics. My Department recently concluded that eir has met its Quarter 3 target and that its target of 101,000 premises were passed on a national basis as at the end of September 2017.

Question No. 520 answered with Question No. 517.

Better Energy Homes Scheme Eligibility

521. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the options open to a person (details supplied) that has been refused an SEAI grant despite their home having been built in 2005; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50392/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): The Better Energy Homes scheme provides cash grants to homeowners towards the cost of a variety of energy efficiency measures. It is funded by my Department and operated by the Sustainable Energy Authority (SEAI) of Ireland.

The Deputy will appreciate that individual applications to the Better Energy Homes scheme are an operational matter for SEAI and I can have no role in such matters. However, a dedicated hot line for queries in relation to the scheme can be reached at 1850 927 000. In addition, SEAI has a dedicated contact point for Members of the Oireachtas, oireachtas@seai.ie.

By way of background and context, the rules of the scheme (paragraph 1.4 of the SEAI grant Application Guide) state that a home must be “built and occupied before 2006”. The method used to establish this is the installation date of the ESB meter as this confirms when the electricity supply was established. Initial grant approval can be given online but is still subject to the terms laid out in the Application Guide. SEAI have informed me that the home in question received an ESB meter in 2006 and therefore could not be considered to be “built and occupied before 2006.”

Grants for energy efficiency upgrades are only available to homes built and occupied before 2006. Houses built and occupied in 2006 or after would have been subject to Building Regulations which require a minimum level of energy efficiency and as such should not require significant upgrades. Grant funding further works in homes that already possess this level of energy efficiency would not represent a cost-effective use of Exchequer funds.

Departmental Contracts Data

522. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the public contracts between his Department and companies (details supplied) in each of the years 2011 to 2016; the value of each contract; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50396/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): The information sought in the Question is set out in the following table. There were no contracts awarded to any of the companies in the years 2011 to 2013 inclusive.

Company	Details of contract	Value (inc VAT)	Year
Ernst and Young	Contracted Head of Internal Audit Unit- EY were contracted to provide a Head of Internal Audit at a cost of €650 per day plus VAT of 23%. The figure across represents the total cost over the period 2014-2016.	€210,167	2014-2016
KPMG	Financial and procurement advice in relation to the National Broadband Plan	€6,049,817	2015
KPMG	Specialist personnel to support the National Broadband Plan	€2,686,320	2016
Deloitte and Touche	Tax and VAT advice related to the National Broadband Plan	€63,591	2016

Question No. 523 answered with Question No. 517.

Broadcasting Sector

524. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if a reply will issue to concerns raised by a person (details supplied) in relation to the retention of both the RTÉ national symphony orchestra and the RTÉ concert orchestra as separate entities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50600/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): RTÉ is an independent national public service broadcaster established under the Broadcasting Act 2009. Section 114(1) of the Act sets out the objects of RTÉ, including the objective 'to establish and maintain orchestras, choirs and other cultural performing groups'. Section 98 of the Act establishes the independence of RTÉ in pursuance of its objects.

Foireann Roinne

525. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Cumarsáide, Gníomhaithe ar son na hAeráide agus Comhshaoil cén líon iomlán foirne atá fostaithe ina Roinn faoi láthair; cé mhéid post atá daingnithe nó aitheanta ag an Roinn (i scéim teanga, nó ar aon bhealach eile) mar phoist a bhfuil riachtanas Gaeilge ag baint leo; cé mhéid duine atá ann ag a bhfuil líofacht i nGaeilge agus atá ag feidhmiú sna poist sin atá daingnithe nó aitheanta mar phoist a bhfuil riachtanas Gaeilge ag baint leo; an bhfuil sé beartaithe ag an tráth seo aon phost eile de chuid na Roinne a aithint mar phoist a bhfuil riachtanas Gaeilge. [50677/17]

526. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Cumarsáide, Gníomhaithe ar son na hAeráide agus Comhshaoil cé mhéid folúntas a líonadh ina Roinn ó thús na bliana seo; cé mhéid de na folúntais sin a bhain le poist a bhí sainaitheanta mar phoist a raibh Gaeilge riachtanach ina leith; cé mhéid folúntas atá le líonadh faoi láthair agus cé mhéid de na folúntais siúd atá sainaitheanta mar fholúntais a bhfuil riachtanas Gaeilge ag baint leo. [50694/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): I propose to take Questions Nos. 525 and 526 together.

Tá an Roinn tiomanta chun seirbhís a chur ar fáil trí Ghaeilge, agus a cuid oibleagáidí reachtúla faoin Acht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla, 2003 a chomhlíonadh. Ullmhaíodh agus foilsíodh Plean Fórsa Saothair 2017-2019 i gcomhair na Roinne i mí Aibreáin 2017, inar cuimsíodh riachtanais maidir le hinniúlacht sa Ghaeilge ar son réimsí gnó ar fud na Roinne.

Is é 376 líon na bhfostaithe atá ina gcoibhéisí lánaimseartha sa Roinn seo agam. Mar chuid den phlean fórsa saothair, aithníodh cúig phost ina iomlán ina mbeadh inniúlacht sa Ghaeilge riachtanach. Tá na poist seo go léir á dhéanamh ag oifigigh a bhfuil Gaeilge líofa acu, sna réimsí seo a leanas:

Oifig/Réimse Gnó	Líon Poist
Oifig phríobháideach an Aire	1
Minister of State's private office Oifig phríobháideach an Aire Stáit	1
Aonad um Fhorbairt Straitéiseach agus Chumarsáid/An Phreasoifig	2
Rannán Craoltóireachta	1

I 2017, earcaíodh 76 ball foirne ina iomlán sa Roinn chun folúntais agus poist nua a líonadh. I mo oifig phríobháideach féin, líonadh folúntas amháin ón bpainéal Gaeilge de chuid Sheirbhís um Cheapacháin Phoiblí, a bhí aitheanta mar phost ina mbeadh inniúlacht sa Ghaeilge riachtanach. In éineacht leis sin, laistigh den Roinn, ceapadh oifigeach Gaeilge breise don aonad um fhorbhairt straitéiseach agus chumarsáid chun feabhas a chur ar na seirbhísí do chustaiméirí, agus ar na cumarsáidí inmheánacha agus seachtracha trí Ghaeilge, agus chun go mbeadh Gaeilge d'ardchaighdeán á úsáid sna hábhair atá le fáil ar shuíomh gréasáin na Roinne (www.dcae.gov.ie). Ina theannta sin, bhí oifigeach ceaptha ag Aire Stáit Kyne dá oifig phríobháideach, oifigeach a bhfuil inniúlacht sa Ghaeilge aici. Gach folúntas sa Roinn atá aitheanta mar cheann ina mbeadh an Ghaeilge riachtanach líonta anois.

Tá scéim teanga na Roinne á athbhreithniú agus á nuashonraithe faoi láthair agus táthar i gceist an plean seo a fhoilsiú go luath i 2018. Mar chuid den phróiseas seo, nascfar an scéim seo le pleanáil d'fhórsa saothair na Roinne chun riachtanais sa bhreis ó thaobh na Gaeilge de a aithint.

Sports Capital Programme Administration

527. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the timeframe for the announcement of sports capital grants. [49859/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The 2017 round of the Sports Capital Programme closed for applications on the 24th February. By the closing date, a record number of 2,320 applications seeking €155 million in grants were received.

When the programme was launched, it was envisaged that €30m would be available which would have made the allocation of grants particularly challenging. Following the conclusion of the budget discussions and in order to allow as many worthwhile projects as possible to receive some funding, we were pleased to secure significant extra resources to allocate under this round.

The assessment of all the 2,320 applications is now complete and full details of the allocations are expected to be announced later this week.

Railway Stations

528. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the engagement he has with Irish Rail regarding the construction of the new railway station at Pelletstown on the Maynooth railway line; if Irish Rail is to commence construction of the station; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49862/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As the Deputy is aware, the National Transport Authority (NTA) has statutory responsibility for the development of public transport infrastructure in the Greater Dublin Area.

In relation to Pelletstown Station, planning permission is in place and work is currently ongoing to complete a detailed design and prepare tender documents for the station's construction. This work is expected to be completed in the next two months and the NTA expect to be able to advise a firm timeline for the construction of this station very early next year.

Road Tolls

529. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if his attention has been drawn to the NRA instructing repossession of property to recoup unpaid toll fees. [49867/17]

530. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of persons in each of the past ten years who have had their cars or other property taken by sheriffs on foot of unpaid toll fees. [49868/17]

531. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the legal powers under which repossessions for unpaid toll fees occur. [49869/17]

532. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the amount collected by tolls in each of the past ten years; the person or body that collects these tolls; and the purpose for which this revenue is used. [49870/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 529 to 532, inclusive, together.

As Minister for Transport, Tourism and 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 (TII, previously NRA) under the Roads Acts 1993-2015 in conjunction with the relevant local authority. For regional and local roads it is a matter for each respective local authority.

More specifically, the statutory powers to levy tolls on national roads as well as regional and local roads, to make toll bye-laws and to enter into toll agreements with private investors are

vested in TII (for national roads) and each local authority (for regional and local roads) 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 for national roads to TII for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

Transport Infrastructure Ireland Projects

533. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will request that TII engage with a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49871/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As Minister for Transport, Tourism & Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme. The planning, design and implementation of individual road projects is a matter for Transport Infrastructure Ireland under the Roads Acts 1993-2015 in conjunction with the local authorities concerned. Within its capital budget, the assessment and prioritisation of individual projects is a matter in the first instance for TII in accordance with Section 19 of the Roads Act.

Noting the above position, I have referred the Deputy's question to TII for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

Sports Funding

534. **Deputy Alan Farrell** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the position regarding his Department's progress in meeting the requirements of an organisation (details supplied) in view of the recent granting of test status to Ireland; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49888/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Neither the Department nor Sport Ireland has been made aware of any particular requirements of the organisation (details Supplied).

The Sports Capital Programme (SCP) is the Government's primary vehicle for supporting the development of sports and physical recreation facilities throughout the country. The maximum grant under the latest round of the SCP is €200,000. In relation to larger scale projects, following the conclusion of the recent budget discussions, my Department is committed to introducing a new Large Scale Sport Infrastructure Fund to help support larger sports projects. The Fund is designed bring a more strategic approach to Government support of national and regional sporting facilities. My Department is committed to finalising the terms and conditions of the new scheme next year and it would, of course, be open to the relevant National Governing Body for the sport to apply for assistance.

Rail Network Expansion

535. **Deputy Alan Farrell** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the position regarding the DART extension to Balbriggan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49889/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As the Deputy is aware, the National Transport Authority's (NTA) Transport Strategy for the GDA 2016-2035 proposes implementation of the overall DART Expansion Programme.

The Government's budgetary framework for capital investment, as set out in Building on Recovery: Infrastructure and Capital Investment 2016-2021, was reviewed earlier this year in the context of the Mid-Term Review of capital priorities, delivery and funding. Following this work, Budget 2018 increased the multi-annual capital investment funding envelopes for the coming four-year period, including providing an enhanced capital envelope of €2.7 billion for public transport investment between 2018 and 2021. Amongst other deliverables, this enhanced allocation will enable acceleration of the initial stages of the overall DART Expansion Programme, focussing particularly at this stage on providing additional fleet to enhance capacity, and extending the electrified DART system. Specifically, it will allow substantial progress on electrification of the Northern rail line as far as Balbriggan - now expected to be delivered in 2022 - and the Maynooth line.

In light of the NTA's responsibility in this area, I have forwarded the Deputy's question to the Authority for further information on the issue raised. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within ten working days.

Appointments to State Boards Data

536. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of vacancies in each State board under the aegis of his Department, in tabular form. [49944/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The information requested by the Deputy is available on my Department's website at the following link <http://www.dttas.ie/corporate/english/state-board-membership-and-approved-fees>.

Ministerial Meetings

537. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when a meeting with this Deputy will be scheduled (details supplied). [49981/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Due to the volume of diary requests in recent months it has not yet been possible to meet this particular request.

However, the Deputy can be assured that I will request officials to consider the matter urgently.

Road Improvement Schemes

538. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if funding will be considered for Coughlanstown Road, Ballymore Eustace in view of the fact that it has been closed for 15 months due to part collapsing into the river. [49982/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The improvement and maintenance of regional and local roads is the statutory responsibility of local authorities, in accordance with the provisions of Section 13 of the Roads Act 1993. Works on those roads are

funded from a 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.

Kildare County Council was allocated grant funding of €18.9 million in January 2017 in respect of regional and local roads. It is open to Kildare County Council to fund works along the L6042 Coughlanstown Road, Ballymore Eustace, County Kildare from its grant allocation if it so wishes.

It is important to reiterate that the role of Exchequer grants for regional and local roads is to supplement local authorities in their spending in this area and it is also open to Kildare County Council to fund works from its own resources.

Appointments to State Boards Data

539. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the names of persons he has appointed to each State board under the aegis of his Department that have not come from the Public Appointments Service list of suitable candidates, in tabular form. [50006/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Section 9.1.1 of the Guidelines on Appointments to State Boards allows for a director appointment outside of the PAS process where 'A specific mechanism for the filling of a vacancy on a State Board is laid down in legislation'

Under Section 6(1) of the Harbours Act 2015 I have the power to appoint 2 additional directors on a temporary basis to the Board of a port company whose shareholding is transferring to the local authority.

The purpose of the section is to provide the new shareholder with board level representation during the transition period ahead of transfer and any appointment made under the section will automatically cease with effect from 31 July 2018 or earlier if the Minister so specifies.

The appointments that I have made to State boards within my remit that have not come from the Public Appointments Service are under this provision and the details requested by the Deputy are set out in the table below:

Board	Board Member	Date of expiry/renewal
Galway Harbour Company		
	Edel McCormack	31.07.18
	Maurice O'Gorman	31.07.18
New Ross Port Company		
	Captain Phil Murphy	02.05.18

Driver Test Waiting Lists

540. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if an earlier date can be offered for a driving test for a person (details supplied) in order to allow them to take up an offer of employment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50007/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): This is a matter for the Road Safety Authority. I have referred the question to the Authority for direct reply. I would ask the Deputy to contact my office if a response is not received within 10 days.

Transport Infrastructure Ireland Projects

541. **Deputy Michael Harty** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his views on whether the site near Newmarket-on-Fergus chosen by Transport Infrastructure Ireland for a new M18 motorway service area is designed to remove business from nearby villages rather than just service normal motorway traffic; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50030/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As Minister for Transport, Tourism & Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme. The planning, design and implementation of individual road projects is a matter for Transport Infrastructure Ireland under the Roads Acts 1993-2015 in conjunction with the local authorities concerned. Within its capital budget, the assessment and prioritisation of individual projects is a matter in the first instance for TII in accordance with Section 19 of the Roads Act.

Noting the above position, I have referred the Deputy's question to TII for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you don't receive a reply within 10 working days.

Transport Infrastructure Ireland Projects

542. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the progress being made to carry out upgrade works on the N14 route; the road class which is being proposed for this route; if costings are available for the various options being considered for this upgrade including the comparative costs of constructing a dual carriageway versus a 2 plus 1 class roadway for this route; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50035/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As Minister for Transport, Tourism & Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme. The planning, design and implementation of individual road projects is a matter for Transport Infrastructure Ireland under the Roads Acts 1993-2015 in conjunction with the local authorities concerned. Within its capital budget, the assessment and prioritisation of individual projects is a matter in the first instance for TII in accordance with Section 19 of the Roads Act.

Noting the above position, I have referred the Deputy's question to TII for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you don't receive a reply within 10 working days.

Greenways Funding

543. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the date for the announcement of the next tranche of greenways funding. [50043/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): My Department is currently developing a strategy for the future development of greenways following a public consultation process earlier in the year. The strategy will provide a long term vision and framework upon which Ireland's greenways can be planned in a strategic manner ensuring the best possible return for State investment. I expect to be in a position to announce a new round of funding for the development of greenways in 2018, following completion of the greenways strategy.

Transport Infrastructure Ireland Projects

544. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will report on his plans to upgrade the N11. [50049/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As Minister for Transport, Tourism & Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme. The planning, design and implementation of individual road projects is a matter for Transport Infrastructure Ireland under the Roads Acts 1993-2015 in conjunction with the local authorities concerned. Within its capital budget, the assessment and prioritisation of individual projects is a matter in the first instance for TII in accordance with Section 19 of the Roads Act.

Noting the above position, I have referred the Deputy's question to TII for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you don't receive a reply within 10 working days.

Ministerial Communications

545. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he has used a private email account to send or receive official documents or positions on Brexit; and if so, the details of this correspondence. [50067/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I have not used a private email account to send or receive official documents or positions on Brexit.

Vehicle Clamping

546. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the position regarding the regulation of clamping vehicles which is provided for in the Vehicle Clamping Act 2015 in view of the fact that the Road Traffic Bill 2016 has been enacted and the technical amendment to the Vehicle Clamping Act 2015 made; the progress made by the NTA with the consultation process in relation to the draft regulations; if the regulations have been finalised; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50083/17]

554. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the position regarding the regulation of clamping vehicles which is provided for in the Vehicle Clamping Act 2015 in view of the fact that the Road Traffic Bill 2016 has been enacted and the technical amendment to the Vehicle Clamping Act 2015 made; the status of the progress made by the NTA with the consultation process in relation to the draft regulations; if the regulations have been finalised; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50297/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 546 and 554 together.

The Vehicle Clamping Act 2015 (Commencement) Order 2017 (SI Number 211/2017) provided for the 1st June 2017 and the 1st October 2017 to be the operative dates for the purposes of the Act.

On the 1st June 2017 a certain number of sections of the Act were commenced to allow the NTA commence a public consultation process in relation to draft Regulations relating to clamping, signage and clamp release charges. This consultation was conducted in June and July and,

subsequently, Regulations were drafted and came into effect on 1 October 2017.

On 1st October 2017 the National Transport Authority (NTA) assumed its responsibilities as the regulator of vehicle clamping activities in both statutory and non-statutory (privately-owned) clamping places throughout the State.

Under the Act the appeals and complaints procedures also came into force on 1st October 2017. The NTA is now responsible for processing all second-stage clamping appeals arising from clamping activities anywhere in the State including such appeals against on-street clamping in Dublin City which were previously administered by Dublin City Council.

The NTA will also prepare a draft code of practice providing practical guidance regarding compliance with the Act and the regulations and establishing standards in relation to the general behaviour, performance of duties and conduct of parking controllers and clamping operators with regard to clamping activities.

The full Vehicle Clamping Act 2015 along with the Vehicle Clamping and Signage Regulations can be viewed on the National Transport Authority website at www.nationaltransport.ie/vehicle-clamping

Departmental Bodies Data

547. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the bodies under the aegis of his Department in which his Department provides in excess of €1 million funding per annum to these bodies; the public funding received by these bodies; the bodies in which 50% or more of its income comes from public sources; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50123/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The information required by the Deputy is published and available in the Revised Estimates Volume (REV). I attach a link for ease of reference to the estimates for 2017. The Deputy may wish to examine the agency statements in relation to Vote 31 which deals with non-commercial state agencies under the aegis of my Department. <http://www.per.gov.ie/en/rev/>.

The Revised Estimates Volume 2018 will be published in early December with updated information.

In addition, Iarnród Éireann has responsibility for the maintenance and operation of the heavy rail network. In accordance with the requirements of EU law, my Department provides annual capital funding to Iarnród Éireann for the maintenance and renewal of the network under the Infrastructure Manager Multi-Annual Contract (IMMAC). The Capital Plan provided €1.3 billion for this purpose. The current IMMAC covers the five-year period 2014-2018. In 2017 €158.8m was allocated to the company for the IMMAC. Iarnród Éireann also receives capital funding, via the National Transport Authority, for heavy rail projects in the Greater Dublin Area (the 2017 allocation was €10.2m) as well as funding under the Accessibility Grants and Regional Cities Programmes.

Dublin Bus Services

548. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the plans Dublin Bus has to improve the 17A and 29A bus routes in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50155/17]

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.

Dublin Airport Authority

549. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when he will next meet the CEO of the Dublin Airport Authority; if he will raise the timeframe for works on the main runway and for the proposed second main runway; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50156/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I have already met with Dalton Philips, CEO of daa, soon after his appointment to the post. In addition, there is a well established framework for regular engagement between officials in my Department and senior management of daa covering a broad range of issues, as appropriate.

daa holds statutory responsibility for the management, operation and development of Dublin Airport, including all elements of the North Runway project and the maintenance of the existing runway infrastructure.

I understand that work to resurface Dublin Airport's main runway is more than two-thirds complete. The 18-month project, which started in November 2016, will also involve an upgrade of the runway's ground lighting system and a full replacement of all cabling and ducting.

The first work package for the North Runway Project (which includes site clearance, new road construction and services diversions) is almost complete. The procurement process for the main contract for runway and taxiway works is currently underway with a view to commencing construction by the end of next year. The North Runway is due to become operational in 2021.

Public Transport

550. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of the rolling out of disability access bus stops particularly in County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50168/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): 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.

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 a Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle Grant Scheme (WAV Scheme) and for accessible bus stops and bus stations.

In light of the NTA's responsibility in this area, I have forwarded the Deputy's question to the NTA for a more detailed reply regarding accessibility on the public transport network. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within ten working days.

Transport Infrastructure Ireland Funding

551. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if funding will be provided in 2018 towards the planning and design of a project (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50239/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As Minister for Transport, Tourism & Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme. The planning, design and implementation of individual road projects is a matter for Transport Infrastructure Ireland under the Roads Acts 1993-2015 in conjunction with the local authorities concerned. Within its capital budget, the assessment and prioritisation of individual projects is a matter in the first instance for TII in accordance with Section 19 of the Roads Act.

Noting the above position, I have referred the Deputy's question to TII for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you don't receive a reply within 10 working days.

Rail Services Data

552. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if Iarnród Éireann has reported to him in relation to annual passenger growth or otherwise on its railway network for 2016 and 2017; the findings as reported to him, by service or line; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50267/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The National Transport Authority (NTA) is responsible for the collection and publication of statistics relating to public transport 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.

Rail Network Safety

553. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if his Department is examining changes to section 89 of the Railway Safety Act 2005; the rationale for these changes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50286/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The Railway Safety Act 2005 is currently under review in my Department, including Part 9 (Intoxicants and Persons Working on Railway Infrastructure) and Part 10 (Offences by Persons Working On Railway Infrastructure) and this review includes Section 89. The rationale behind the review of the existing provisions in relation to intoxicants (drug and alcohol) is to identify any revision, clarification and updating requirements and to modernise some terminology used in the Act, with a view to preparing proposals for legislative amendments. As part of its work, the Department is commencing a consultation with relevant bodies including the Commission for Railway Regulation (which is the independent statutory-based regulator for railway safety in Ireland) and the Railway Safety Advisory Council (which is a statutory-based advisory council whose members are drawn from across areas of expertise and experience relevant to rail safety).

Question No. 554 answered with Question No. 546.

Sports Capital Programme Applications Data

555. **Deputy Declan Breathnach** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of applications for the sports capital grant that were made from clubs and organisations in County Louth; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50317/17]

558. **Deputy Declan Breathnach** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of applications for the sports capital grant that were made from clubs and organisations in County Louth; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50353/17]

572. **Deputy Declan Breathnach** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of applications for the sports capital grant that were made from clubs and organisations in counties Louth and Meath; the details of clubs and organisations and the amounts applied for, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50664/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin): I propose to take Questions Nos. 555, 558 and 572 together.

The 2017 round of the Sports Capital Programme closed for applications on the 24th February. By the closing date, a record number of 2,320 applications seeking €155 million in grants were received. A list of all applications received is available on the Department's website at <http://www.dttas.ie/sport/english/sports-capital-programme-applications-received>.

I expect that full details of the allocations will be announced later this week.

Bus Services

556. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will address issues regarding the disjointed nature of the bus lane along the N3, where at almost all junctions the bus must move out of the bus lane into traffic and then move back into the bus lane; if he will ensure buses can move more efficiently along the N3 without impediment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50332/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As Minister for Transport, Tourism & Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme. The planning, design and implementation of individual road projects is a matter for Transport Infrastructure Ireland under the Roads Acts 1993-2015 in conjunction with the local authorities concerned. Within its capital budget, the assessment and prioritisation of individual projects is a matter in the first instance for TII in accordance with Section 19 of the Roads Act.

Noting the above position, I have referred the Deputy's question to TII for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you don't receive a reply within 10 working days.

Road Traffic Legislation

557. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to bring in legislation to amend section 41 of the Road Traffic Act 1994; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50347/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Section 41 of the Road Traffic Act 1994 empowers An Garda Síochána to detain, store, release, or dispose of vehicles in certain specified circumstances.

On 14 November 2017, during the second stage debate in Dáil Éireann on the Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill 2017, I indicated that I intend to amend the circumstances listed in section 41 to add a situation in which the driver is an unaccompanied learner driver. I propose to do so as an amendment to that Bill during its passage through the Dáil.

Learner drivers are required by law to have an accompanying qualified driver. Failure to do so puts the learner driver and other road users at risk. I believe that enabling An Garda Síochána to detain a vehicle in these circumstances will be an important enforcement tool as well as an important deterrent to this dangerous behaviour.

Question No. 558 answered with Question No. 555.

Local Government Fund

559. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the amount received by his Department from the local government fund in each of the years 2011 to 2016 and to date in 2017; and the estimated amount in 2018. [50361/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The table sets out the local government funds received in each of the years 2011 to 2017. The receipts are paid quarterly and to date in 2017 we have received €165m with the balance due in December.

Legislation has now been passed and responsibility for motor tax policy and associated functions is being transferred from the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government to my Department. From 2018 onwards my Department will not be receiving funding from the local government fund but payments will be replaced by additional Voted funds as part of the normal budgetary process.

Year	€m
2011	410,788
2012	418,475
2013	421,841
2014	372,443
2015	370,043
2016	361,243
2017	345,500

Noise Pollution Legislation

560. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the position regarding the introduction of primary legislation to give effect to EU Regulation 598/2014 on aircraft noise management; if a public body has been nominated as the competent authority for the purpose of the regulation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50390/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The Deputy may be aware that in October I advised the Dáil of the most recently received legal advices which have had the effect of ruling out the Irish Aviation Authority as the preferred nominated Competent Authority under EU Regulation 598/14.

While this clearly represents a setback, my Department is working to find an expeditious

resolution to this issue, and I expect to receive revised proposals on this matter in the near future. Furthermore, I expect these proposals to be subjected to detailed legal scrutiny before a final decision is made.

As soon as an implementable course of action is presented to me for decision I will advise the House of my intentions.

Departmental Contracts Data

561. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the public contracts between his Department and companies (details supplied) in each of the years 2011 to 2016; the value of each contract; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50409/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The information requested by the Deputy is available on my Department's website at the following link:

<http://www.dttas.ie/corporate/english/expenditure-external-services>.

Sports Capital Programme

562. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the sources of finance a rowing club can apply for aside from the sports capital grant; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50442/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The Sports Capital Programme is the Government's primary vehicle for supporting the development of sports facilities and the purchase of non-personal sports equipment. Apart from the Sports Capital Programme, it is also possible for sports clubs to raise funds via the 'Tax Relief for Donations to Certain Sports Bodies' scheme (section 847A of the Taxes Consolidation Act, 1997). This is a Revenue Commissioners operated scheme which offers tax benefits to individuals or companies who make donations to sports clubs. Further details on this scheme and how it operates can be found on the Revenue Commissioners website.

Outside of the above, I understand that support for sports clubs is sometimes provided by the National Governing Bodies of Sport, Local Authorities (including Local Sports Partnerships) and Local Development Companies such as LEADER Partnerships.

Road Projects Status

563. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of the upgrade for the N4 from Mullingar to Rooskey. [50507/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As Minister for Transport, Tourism & Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme. The planning, design and implementation of individual road projects is a matter for Transport Infrastructure Ireland under the Roads Acts 1993-2015 in conjunction with the local authorities concerned. Within its capital budget, the assessment and prioritisation of individual projects is a matter in the first instance for TII in accordance with Section 19 of the Roads Act.

Noting the above position, I have referred the Deputy's question to TII for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you don't receive a reply within 10 working days.

Driver Licences

564. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if motorcyclists renewing their full licences are required to provide an initial basic training certificate; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50514/17]

565. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if motorcyclists that hold licences and are progressed to licences for larger bikes are required to do the training course and provide an initial basic training certificate as they move through each stage to Class A full licence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50515/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 564 and 565 together.

Initial Basic Training (IBT) is a requirement of the motorcycle learner process, and was introduced in 2011 as part of the Graduated Driver Licensing system. Under the Road Traffic (Courses of Instruction) (Motorcycles) Regulations 2011 (S.I. No. 681 of 2011), which provide for IBT, anyone acquiring a learner permit for a motorcycle must first complete IBT before driving a motorcycle in a public place, except on occasions where they are doing so as part of an IBT training course.

IBT is a requirement under the regulations for anyone acquiring a first learner permit in any of the motorcycle categories after the commencement of the regulations.

In relation to the specific queries raised by the Deputy, there is no requirement to undertake IBT for renewal of a licence.

When a person who already holds a licence in one of the motorcycle categories becomes a learner in one of the other categories, they are required to take the IBT course for that category. The rationale for this is that they are now a learner in a different class of machine which requires different handling.

Driver Test Data

566. **Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of persons awaiting an appointment for a driving test, by county; the average waiting time for receiving an appointment nationwide; the worse ten centres for waiting times to date; his plans to deal with these backlogs; if a reserve list of driving testers is available to clear such backlogs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50616/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): This is a matter for the Road Safety Authority. I have referred the question to the Authority for direct reply. I would ask the Deputy to contact my office if a response is not received within 10 days.

Railway Stations

567. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the posi-

tion regarding the re opening of Dunleer railway station, County Louth; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50617/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I wish to advise the Deputy that my previous reply in response to Dáil Question No. 1045 on 13 July 2017 from the Deputy on this issue remains unchanged. Iarnród Éireann has not made any proposal to my Department regarding Dunleer railway station and the reopening of the station is not included in the public transport projects under the Government's present Capital Plan.

Road Projects Status

568. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the position regarding the proposed bypass of Ardee; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50618/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme. The planning, design and implementation of individual road projects is a matter for Transport Infrastructure Ireland under the Roads Acts 1993-2015 in conjunction with the local authorities concerned. Within its capital budget, the assessment and prioritisation of individual projects is a matter in the first instance for TII in accordance with Section 19 of the Roads Act.

Noting the above position, I have referred the Deputy's question to TII for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you don't receive a reply within 10 working days.

Rail Network

569. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his views on whether there is overcrowding on rail lines; his further views on the need for greater capacity on rail lines, particularly on the Dunboyne and Drogheda commuter lines; and his plans to authorise the purchase of more rolling stock to meet demand. [50619/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, I have responsibility for policy and overall funding of public transport. The operation of the heavy rail network and for assessing rolling stock requirements for the network are a matter for Iarnród Éireann in the first instance in conjunction with the National Transport Authority.

Noting the responsibility of the agencies, I have referred the Deputy's question to Iarnród Éireann for direct reply on the specific issues raised. Please advise my office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

Regional Road Network

570. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if consideration will be given to the funding of pedestrian crossing facilities at a location in Dublin 11 (details supplied) in view of the fact that the area has a high level of population growth including almost 3,000 children under 18 years of age and a total population of almost 9,000; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50643/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The improvement and maintenance of regional and local roads and traffic management within its area of responsibility is the statutory responsibility of each local authority.

As regards the grants provided by my Department to local authorities to supplement their own expenditure relating to road maintenance and improvement, the four Dublin Councils became self funding for regional and local roads under the main road grant headings from 2015 due their receipts from the Local Property Tax.

In relation to the Sustainable Traffic Management Grants mentioned in the Council's proposal, this scheme is the responsibility of the National Transport Authority and I have, therefore,

referred the Deputy's Question to the Authority for direct reply. Please advise my Office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days

Sports Capital Programme

571. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to announce the sports capital grants for 2017: the reason for the delay in announcing these grants; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50649/17]

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 24 February. By the closing date, a record number of 2,320 applications seeking €155 million in grants were received.

When the programme was launched, it was envisaged that €30m would be available which would have made the allocation of grants particularly challenging. Following the conclusion of the budget discussions and in order to allow as many worthwhile projects as possible to receive some funding, Minister Ross and I were pleased to secure significant extra resources to allocate under this round.

The assessment of all the 2,320 applications is now complete and it is expected that details of the allocations will be announced later this week.

Question No. 572 answered with Question No. 555.

Foireann Roinne

573. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Iompair, Turasóireachta agus Spóirt cén líon iomlán foirne atá fostaithe ina Roinn faoi láthair; cé mhéid post atá daingnithe nó aitheanta ag an Roinn (i scéim teanga, nó ar aon bhealach eile) mar phoist a bhfuil riachtanas Gaeilge ag baint leo; cé mhéid duine atá ann ag a bhfuil líofacht i nGaeilge agus atá ag feidhmiú sna poist sin atá daingnithe nó aitheanta mar phoist a bhfuil riachtanas Gaeilge ag baint leo; an bhfuil sé beartaithe ag an tráth seo aon phost eile de chuid na Roinne a aithint mar phoist a bhfuil riachtanas Gaeilge. [50690/17]

574. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Iompair, Turasóireachta agus Spóirt cé mhéid folúntas a líonadh ina Roinn ó thús na bliana seo; cé mhéid de na folúntais sin a bhain le poist a bhí sainaitheanta mar phoist a raibh Gaeilge riachtanach ina leith; cé mhéid folúntas atá le líonadh faoi láthair agus cé mhéid de na folúntais siúd atá sainaitheanta mar fholúntais a bhfuil riachtanas Gaeilge ag baint leo. [50707/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 573 and 574 together.

There are currently 513 staff, including temporary staff, in my Department and I anticipate this will increase to 514 by year end. 80 staff have been recruited in to my Department this year, in the main to fill vacancies arising from transfers, retirements, etc. There is one post which requires competence in the Irish language and that is the Irish Language Officer post. There are a number of people in my Department who have written and oral fluency in the Irish language outside of this post. They provide a service through Irish on a voluntary basis alone.

My Department has committed within its 2017-2020 Irish Language Scheme to, by the end of year one of the scheme, identify if any posts for which Irish language competency is an essential requirement. Every effort will be made to fulfill these requirements by the end of this scheme having regard to recruitment, promotion and training policies, as appropriate. This will enable this Department to plan and prioritise the incremental improvement of services in Irish in a more strategic manner. This will be reviewed on an annual basis.

Tá foireann 513 in mo Roinn faoi láthair, foireann shealadach san áireamh, agus tá súil agam go méadóidh an líon seo go 514 faoi dheireadh na bliana. Earcaíodh 80 ball foirne ar mo Roinn i mbliana, go príomha le folúntais a líonadh a eascraíonn as aistrithe, scor, etc. Is é post an Oifigigh Gaeilge an t-aon phost amháin i mo Roinn a éilíonn inniúlacht sa Ghaeilge. Tá roinnt ball foirne sa Roinn atá líofa i scríobh agus labhairt na Gaeilge taobh amuigh den phost seo. Cuireann siad seirbhís trí Ghaeilge ar fáil ar bhonn deonach amháin.

Tá mo Roinn tiomanta do phoist a aithint a éilíonn sa Ghaeilge, faoi dheireadh na chéad bhliana dá Scéim Teanga Gaeilge 2017-2010. Déanfar gach iarracht na riachtanais seo a chomhlíonadh faoi dheireadh na scéime seo, ag féachaint do chúrsaí eacraíochta, arduithe céime agus do pholasaithe oiliúna, mar is cuí. Cuirfidh sé seo ar chumas na Roinne feabhsú incriminteach a gcuid seirbhísí Gaeilge a phleanáil agus a chur chun tosaíochta ar bhealach níos straitéisí. Déanfar athbhreithniú air seo ar bhonn bliantúil.

Domestic Violence Refuges Provision

575. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs her plans for the provision of a 24-7 refuge for victims of domestic violence in Dún Laoghaire Rathdown; if so, the timeframe for the development of this refuge; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50009/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, has statutory responsibility for the care and protection of victims of domestic, sexual and gender based violence whether in the context of the family or otherwise. At all times, Tusla's key priority is to ensure that the needs of victims of domestic violence are being met in the best way possible.

In 2017, I provided Tusla with funding of over €22 million for domestic, sexual and gender-based violence services. This represented an increase of €1.5 million over 2016. Arising from Budget 2018, I am pleased to inform the Deputy that a further increase in funding of €1.7 million is being provided to Tusla next year for these services.

Tusla's priority is to achieve the best outcomes for victims of domestic violence from the use of its available resources. The provision of capital funding for refuges is dealt with by the Housing Authorities and the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government.

Tusla recognises that the provision of emergency refuge accommodation for victims of domestic violence is a core element of the response to domestic violence. Safe Homes provide another service to those affected by domestic violence that may require lower levels of support. Safe Home accommodation comprises independent housing units with additional safety measures, where victims and families receive intensive support to achieve long term safety and well-being.

While there is no domestic violence refuge located in the Dún Laoghaire Rathdown area, there are currently four units of emergency Safe Home accommodation provided in the area, which are supported by Tusla. Victims of domestic violence and their children can also access emergency refuge accommodation in refuges across Dublin or in adjacent areas, such as Bray and Tallaght. At present there are no plans for development of a refuge in the Dún Laoghaire Rathdown area.

Tusla is aware of service pressures in certain areas of the country, and is actively examining needs and appropriate responses through its commissioning process. Tusla will continue to engage with service providers and other stakeholders to review accommodation and to improve provision in areas of need.

Vacancies on State Boards

576. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of vacancies in each State board under the aegis of her Department, in tabular form. [49930/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I am responsible for appointment of members to the boards of the Adoption Authority of Ireland, the Child and Family Agency (Tusla), Gaisce and the Board of Management of the Oberstown Children Detention Campus. There are currently no vacancies on any of the State boards under the aegis of my Department.

Appointments to State Boards Data

577. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the names of persons she has appointed to each State board under the aegis of her Department that have not come from the Public Appointments Service list of suitable candidates, in tabular form. [49992/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I am responsible for the appointment of members to the boards of the Adoption Authority of Ireland, the Child and Family Agency (Tusla), Gaisce (the President's Award) and the Board of Management for Oberstown Children Detention Campus. Since becoming Minister in May 2016, I have made 11 appointments that have not come from the Public Appointments Service lists of suitable candidates.

I made 13 appointments to the new Board of Management for Oberstown Children Detention Campus with effect from 1 June 2016. The Board consists of the Chairperson and 12 Ordinary members. Of the 12 Ordinary members, I appointed 5 members from a list of suitable candidates following advertisement by the Public Appointments Service.

I appointed Professor Ursula Kilkelly, Dean of the School of Law, University College Cork

as Chairperson of the Oberstown Board. Professor Kilkelly is recognised as a leading expert in issues relating to the detention of children and has published widely on youth justice issues. She was already a member of the Board since 2012 and had been acting chairperson since May 2015.

I appointed the remaining 7 members of the Oberstown board on foot of the requirements of section 167 of the Children Act 2001, as follows:

- Mr Jim Gibson - interim Chief Operations Officer of Tusla, the Child and Family Agency was nominated by the Minister for Health;

- Ms Fionnuala Anderson - an Education Officer in Dublin and Dun Laoghaire Education and Training Board was nominated by the Minister for Education and Skills;

- Ms Sinead O’Herlihy and Mr Fiachra Barrett are members of staff on the Oberstown campus who were nominated for appointment on foot of a local balloting process by Oberstown staff in December 2015;

- Mr Pat Rooney and Ms Elizabeth Howard are local community residents in the vicinity of the Oberstown campus and were nominated by Lusk Community Council in November 2015;

- Mr Dan Kelleher is a former Principal Officer in the Irish Youth Justice Service, Department of Children and Youth Affairs.

Mr Dan Kelleher was subsequently replaced by Mr Tadgh Delaney in the Irish Youth Justice Service, Department of Children and Youth Affairs. Mr Liam Walsh was appointed on 2 November 2016 following his nomination by the Minister for Education and Skills to replace Ms Fionnuala Anderson who had previously resigned.

I appointed Ms Miriam Dollard, a nomination of the Taoiseach, to the board of Gaisce in November 2016.

All other appointments that I have made to State boards under the aegis of my Department have been selected from suitable candidates identified through the Public Appointments Service process.

The information sought by the Deputy is set out in tabular form, as requested, below.

Board	Board Member	Date of Appointment
	Ursulla Kilkelly Jim Gibson Fionnuala Anderson Sinead O’Herlihy Fiachra Barrett Pat Rooney Elizabeth Howard Dan Kelleher	01/6/2016
	Tadgh Delaney Board	26/07/2016 Board Member

Board	Board Member	Date of Appointment
Board of Management for Oberstown Children Detention Campus	Liam Walsh	02/11/2016 Ursulla Kilkelly Jim Gibson Fionnuala Aderson Sinead O’Herlihy Fiachra Barrett Pat Rooney Elizabeth Howard Dan Kelleher
Gaisce	Miriam Dollard	24/11/2016 Tadgh Delaney
	Board of Management for Oberstown Children Detention Campus	Liam Walsh

Ministerial Communications

578. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she has used a private email account to send or receive official documents or positions on Brexit; and if so, the details of this correspondence. [50053/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I have not used a private email account for the purpose outlined in the Deputy’s question.

Departmental Bodies Data

579. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the bodies under the aegis her Department in which her Department provides in excess of €1 million funding per annum to these bodies; the public funding received by these bodies; the bodies in which 50% or more of its income comes from public sources; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50109/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Particulars of the State bodies under the aegis of my Department and details of the Exchequer provisions allocated to them in 2017 are set out in the table:

Agency	€m
Child and Family Agency	713
Oberstown Children Detention Campus	26
Adoption Authority of Ireland	4
Office of the Ombudsman for Children	6

After-School Support Services

580. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if there is an

existing subsidy or tax relief for persons that send their children to Educate Together homework clubs; the details of these initiatives and income thresholds; her plans to increase the subsidy or tax relief for persons that currently do not qualify; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50140/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): My Department provides subsidies for after school childcare which can include homework clubs.

Families are eligible for subsidies under the Community Childcare Subvention (CCS), Community Childcare Subvention Plus (CCSP) and Training and Employment (TEC) programmes. This childcare funding may be used towards a place in an afterschool setting. The subsidies are paid to childcare providers for eligible families. The rates of subsidy vary according to certain eligibility criteria including social welfare and/or medical card entitlement or participating in a Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection employment programme. Under the measures which were introduced in September the subsidy rates have been increased significantly, in some instances, as much as 50%. by significantly increasing the subsidy rates for the Community Childcare Subvention and the Training and Employment Childcare Schemes, in some instance by as much as 50%. While the childcare funding is not specifically for homework clubs, the childcare place may involve homework supports.

I can confirm that the SCP budget for 124 SCP projects for the school years 2014/15, 2015/16 and 2016/17 was €23.3m per annum. For the school year 2015-16, the total level of spend for SCP projects on Interventions was €7.4m. Homework clubs fall within this element of the SCP budget and feature prominently in the returns. Interventions are split between In-School Interventions, After School Supports and Summer Supports.

I would like to highlight that significant progress has been made regarding the development of the Affordable Childcare Scheme (ACS). Once introduced, it will provide childcare supports for children aged from 6 months to 15 years. The ACS will replace the existing targeted childcare programmes with a single, streamlined and more user-friendly scheme and will include “wraparound” care for pre-school and school-age children.

The issue of tax relief should be addressed to the Minister of Finance as tax matters do not fall under the remit of my Department.

Child Care Costs

581. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if her attention has been drawn to the fact that large numbers of child care providers are continuing to increase fees following the introduction of the universal child care subsidy resulting in a loss of benefit to parents; the steps she is taking to address this; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50291/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): As the Deputies will be aware, the factors impacting on the costs across delivery of services in any sector are complex and multifaceted. The cost to childcare providers is affected by many factors such as rates, rent, labour costs, and insurance amongst other things.

The cost to parents to access that childcare is decided by childcare providers taking account of these overheads.

Notwithstanding this, I am committed to ensuring that childcare is affordable, accessible and of a high quality.

The increase in supports I have provided from this month for the next programme year represents a major step towards accessible affordable quality childcare after decades of neglect and under-investment by successive Governments.

There are two supports being rolled out under the Community Childcare Scheme. These include universal non means tested supports of up to €1,040 per year and enhanced supports of up to €7,500 per year to assist families to return to work, and/or training and education.

I am delighted with the strong response from the sector. The number of providers signing up to deliver the services increases daily.

My Department is monitoring the cost of childcare closely and will continue to do so. Initial research from a sampling of services shows that fee increases for full-term services delivering the Community Childcare Scheme (including CCS Plus) rose by €5.26 on average between this programme year (2017/18) and the previous programme year. By way of comparison the fees across all services delivering full-time childcare rose by €7.26 between 2015/16 and 2016/17 following a number of years of price stagnation. If over the coming weeks or months those percentage increases in fees by service providers were to rise, then I will consider whether actions such as regulation or price capping is required for government schemes. Towards meeting some of the administrative overhead, I announced in recent months payments totalling €3.5m towards ‘non contact time’ for all childcare providers who register for the enhanced childcare measures under the Community Childcare Scheme. This, in addition to €14.5m that has been already paid to childcare services so far in 2017 in recognition of administration associated with ECCE and other schemes, provides for €18m in ‘non-contact time’ payments this year.

Internet Safety

582. **Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if her attention has been drawn to the term within the video gaming industry of loot crates which is in effect is a system whereby in game currency or real money is used to unlock certain procedures or cosmetics within a particular video game; her views on whether this is an inappropriate form of in game gambling that preys on young children leaving them exposed to a form of online gambling at a young age; and the measures she plans to take to address this issue. [50306/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I am not familiar with the issues to which the Deputy refers. My Department has no remit in relation to the regulation of video games or online technologies. The classification of video games and regulations relating to gambling are within the remit of my colleague the Minister for Justice and Equality.

However, I am concerned about the need to protect children from online abuse and other dangers from which they need protection. I believe these issues require a whole of Government approach as I have outlined in my reply to Deputy Rabbitte’s Priority Question today.

Youth Services Funding

583. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the level of funding for youth affairs in County Meath; and the way this compares with other counties. [50333/17]

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 in communities. I am pleased to confirm that the total youth funding by my Department was €57.4m 2017. Budget 2018 provided an additional €1.5m in current funding to my Department to support the provision of youth services. This additional funding will be used for programmes that target disadvantaged young people. My Department has commenced a process with national organisations and local services to identify service development needs for 2018 and to finalise the 2018 allocations. Every effort will be made to complete this process as soon as possible.

In 2017, an amount of €138,788 was allocated for the targeted youth projects and services in County Meath, as follows:

Projects - Meath	2017 Grant
Youth Work Ireland	€92,842
Involve - Meath Youth Traveller Project (Navan)	€45,946
Total	€138,788

Funding to these staff-led youth services has generally been targeted at areas of disadvantage and not in proportion to the youth population of each county. My Department this year completed an exercise with Pobal and each Education and Training Board which mapped youth service provision across the State. This mapping exercise will assist my Department and each Education and Training Board in developing a detailed social demographic profile in terms of both population numbers and deprivation levels and will inform future development and investment in youth services. My Department is committed to working with Louth and Meath Education and Training Board to identify need and explore ways to address this need where it emerges.

The Local Youth Club Grant Scheme supports youth work activities at a local level. These grants are made available to all youth clubs and groups through the local Education and Training Boards. The scheme, which is open to new entrants, is advertised locally and applications for funding are invited by the Education and Training Boards from local groups in their respective areas. Each year, some 1,700 local youth clubs are eligible to apply under the scheme. In 2017, I have provided an additional 10% in funding to the scheme, bringing the total allocation to €1.1715. Funds are allocated to each of the sixteen Education and Training Boards, in proportion to the most recent census population in 10 to 24 age range available at the time of allocation.

In addition, I was pleased to approve the establishment the Local Youth Club Equipment Scheme in 2017 which will provide €6.35m. nationally. The primary focus of this scheme was to assist volunteer led clubs and groups that work with young people in communities throughout the country. The scheme provides for the purchase of equipment for sport, arts, adventure and other much needed items. Allocations to each of the sixteen Education and Training Boards were distributed in proportion to the number of clubs eligible to apply under the Local Youth Club Grant Scheme.

Youth Officers of the Education and Training Boards have an important support role to my Department in the administration and coordination of youth services at local level. Youth Officers engage with local services, on behalf of my Department. They provide support and advice in matters to do with the application and reporting processes for funding and the implementa-

tion of quality standards in services for young people. In this context, I was pleased to provide funding to Louth and Meath Education and Training Board recruit a second youth officer during 2017. The allocation to the Education and Training Board for this purpose amounted to €129,640 in 2017.

Child and Family Agency Reports

584. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs further to Parliamentary Question No. 371 of 24 October 2017, the status of Tusla's draft policy regarding adult disclosures of abuse in view of the fact that she expected this to be finalised in November. [50363/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Tusla have informed me that the policy is due to be presented to the Tusla Senior Management Team for review by the end of this week. Once approved, it is expected that the document will be ready for publication in early December.

Tusla's primary focus is always on risk to children that may be identified when a disclosure of abuse is made. Tusla is sensitive to the difficulty a person making such an allegation may experience, and provides information and supports where possible. Tusla must also, under the principles laid out in the Barr Judgement, ensure that a person against whom an allegation of abuse has been made is dealt with fairly and with due process.

Early Childhood Care and Education

585. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the status of the review her Department has commissioned into the cost of providing early childhood care and education; and the date by which this review will be published. [50364/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The Independent Review of the Cost of Providing Quality Childcare is a critical input to the on-going reform of childcare in Ireland and is commitment in the Programme for Government.

This Review seeks to:

- Analyse the current costs of providing childcare in Ireland and factors that impact on those costs;
- Develop a model of the unit cost/costs of providing childcare that allows analysis of policy changes and variation in cost-drivers, including the potential impact of increased professionalisation; and
- Provide an objective, high level market analysis of the childcare sector in Ireland, including analysis of fee levels charged to parents.

The contract to undertake this Review was awarded to Crowe Horwath in September 2017. A literature review is currently underway and preliminary stakeholder engagement has already commenced.

These initial steps will inform subsequent steps of the Review, including a survey of childcare providers in early 2018 and the development of a cost model and cost calculator.

This Review is expected to take approximately 10 months to complete with the final report expected in June 2018.

Services for People with Disabilities

586. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the funding that has been allocated for the administration of and application process for level 5 of the access and inclusion model in 2016 and 2017. [50365/17]

587. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the funding that has been allocated for the administration of and application process for level 7 of the access and inclusion model in 2016 and 2017. [50366/17]

597. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the amount of funding that has been allocated for the administration of and application process for level four of the access and inclusion model in 2016 and 2017. [50473/17]

598. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the amount of funding that has been allocated for the administration of and application process for level six of the access and inclusion model in 2016 and 2017. [50474/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I propose to take Questions Nos. 586, 587, 597 and 598 together.

AIM supports children with disabilities to reap the full benefits of free pre-school education. Its goal is to empower pre-school providers to deliver an inclusive pre-school experience. AIM is a child-centred and evidence-based model, involving seven levels of progressive support, moving from the universal to the targeted, based on the needs of the child and the pre-school setting. AIM was launched in June 2016 and is administered by Pobal on behalf of my Department.

The following amounts have been allocated to Pobal in 2016 and 2017 for operational costs associated with AIM Levels 4, 5 and 7. The AIM Level 4 allocation includes the costs of 65 Early Years Specialists, a team of 7 co-ordinators and 2 administrative officers.

Level	Element of model	Allocation for Operational Costs (m)	
		2016	2017
4.	Expert Early Years Educational Advice and Support	3.395	5.890
5.7.	Equipment, Appliances and Minor Alterations Grants and application process and Additional Assistance in the Pre-School Room and Application Process	0.575	1.736

The table excludes funding for AIM Level 6, which is funded separately by the Department of Health.

Services for People with Disabilities

588. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number

of applications made for the access and inclusion model in 2016 and 2017, in tabular form. [50367/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): AIM supports children with disabilities to reap the full benefits of free pre-school education. Its goal is to empower pre-school providers to deliver an inclusive pre-school experience. AIM is a child-centred and evidence-based model, involving seven levels of progressive support, moving from the universal to the targeted, based on the needs of the child and the pre-school setting. AIM was launched in June 2016 and is administered by Pobal on behalf of my Department.

The majority of applications for targeted supports under AIM are done by way of the submission of an Access and Inclusion Profile. This is completed by the parent and pre-school provider, in advance of the provision of an Early Years Specialist support under AIM Level 4. Targeted supports from other levels of AIM (i.e. Levels 5-7) may also be requested at this stage. The following table represents the number of Access and Inclusion Profiles submitted in 2016 and to date in 2017.

-	2016	2017
AIM Access & Inclusion Profiles Submitted	1,488	2,839

Services for People with Disabilities

589. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the average number of hours of additional assistance provided to children at level 7 of the access and inclusion model. [50368/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): AIM supports children with disabilities to reap the full benefits of free pre-school education. Its goal is to empower pre-school providers to deliver an inclusive pre-school experience. AIM is a child-centred and evidence-based model, involving seven levels of progressive support, moving from the universal to the targeted, based on the needs of the child and the pre-school setting. AIM was launched in June 2016 and is administered by Pobal on behalf of my Department.

In line with emerging best practice to support the integration and independence of children with a disability, AIM does not fund Special Needs Assistants (SNAs). Rather, it provides financial support to the pre-school provider, which can be used either to reduce the adult to child ratio in the pre-school room or buy in additional assistance to the pre-school room. Accordingly, AIM Level 7 support is a shared resource for the pre-school setting

A pre-school provider, in partnership with a parent, can apply for AIM Level 7 support - additional capitation. Where the AIM Early Years Specialist (a support provided under AIM Level 4) considers that an AIM Level 7 support is critical to a child's participation in the ECCE programme, they will further consider the degree of Level 7 support required having regard to the needs of the child and the pre-school setting.

There are two rates of Level 7 capitation. The lower rate is €130 per week (which is calculated on the basis of 10 hours of support per week) and the higher rate is €195 per week (which is calculated on the basis of 15 hours of support per week).

Pobal has advised that since AIM was introduced, 357 children have been approved for Level 7 capitation at the lower rate and 2,106 children have been approved for Level 7 capitation at the higher rate.

Departmental Contracts Data

590. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the public contracts between her Department and companies (details supplied) in each of the years 2011 to 2016; the value of each contract; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50395/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The information requested by the Deputy is presented in tabular format below:

Year	Company	Purpose	Value
2011	Deloitte & Touche	Audit Services on the EU Youth in Action Programme	€7,617.00
2012	Deloitte & Touche	Audit Services on the EU Youth in Action Programme	€8,911.35
2013	Deloitte & Touche	Audit Services on the EU Youth in Action Programme	€7,487.66
2014	Deloitte & Touche	Audit Services on the EU Youth in Action Programme	€7,488.24
2015	Deloitte & Touche	Audit Services on the EU Youth in Action Programme	€8,781.28
	Ernst & Young	Internal Audit Management Services	€81,750.74
2016	Deloitte & Touche	Audit Services on the EU Youth in Action Programme	€8,781.30
	Ernst & Young	Internal Audit Management Services	€1,918.80

The payments to Ernst & Young were made in 2015 via the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources as the lead Department in a shared contract for audit services.

Domestic Violence Services Funding

591. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if capital investment will be made available to an organisation (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50428/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, has statutory responsibility for the care and protection of victims of domestic, sexual and gender based violence whether in the context of the family or otherwise. At all times, Tusla's key priority is to ensure that the needs of victims of domestic violence are being

met in the best way possible.

In 2017, I provided Tusla with funding of over €22 million for domestic, sexual and gender-based violence services. This was an increase of €1.5 million over 2016. Arising from Budget 2018, I am pleased to inform the Deputy that a further increase in funding of €1.7 million is being provided to Tusla next year for these services.

Tusla's priority is to achieve the best outcomes for victims of domestic violence from the use of its available resources. The provision of capital funding for refuges is dealt with by the Housing Authorities and the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government.

Tusla is aware that there have been discussions locally between the organisation in question and Wexford County Council about a potential development, and has indicated that it will work with all key stakeholders in enhancing responses to victims of domestic violence in County Wexford.

Early Childhood Care and Education

592. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the steps she is taking to address the considerable shortages in ECCE places that exist in certain parts of the country; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50454/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): My Department has conducted an analysis of ECCE capacity and is satisfied that there will be no shortfall in ECCE places for the 2017/2018 programme year.

It should be noted that the peak number of children attending ECCE in 2016/2017 was just over 120,000. The 2017/2018 numbers are expected (and on track) to be in line with 2016/2017 uptake. Further, from September 2018, the ECCE Programme will revert to one single entry point in a given ECCE Programme Year (i.e. September) with eligible children entitled to two full years of ECCE provision. From September 2018, the number of ECCE enrolments in any given year will be around 114,000. The fact that 120,000 children were provided with ECCE places in April 2017 suggests that there is sufficient capacity to deal with the lower, be it all year round, number of 114,000.

As with the previous expansion of the ECCE programme, my Department is working closing with all of the City and County Childcare Committees to monitor a range of scheme related issues, including capacity. In the event that capacity issues emerge, we will seek to address these accordingly.

Recent media statements on this issue cited the total number of children aged 3-5 in the population and concluded that there was a capacity issue for ECCE. This did not account for the many 4 and 5 year olds already in primary school, nor those who opt for only one year of the ECCE Programme. The conclusion that a capacity issue exists is therefore inaccurate.

One of the measures I took in 2016, and again in 2017, was to support capital development. My Department provided €8.4million for its 2017 Early Years Capital funding programme and €4m for the 2016 Early Years Capital Funding Programme. The 2017 funding was made available to providers under three strands, the largest of which (€4.2m) went towards enabling services to provide additional childcare places. I will be announcing details of the 2018 Capital scheme in the very near future.

Combatting Cyberbullying

593. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs her role in protecting children from online bullying, abuse and grooming; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50455/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I refer the Deputy to the reply that I provided to the same question that she asked as a Priority Question today.

Foster Care

594. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the steps she will take to address the evaluations by HIQA that have found that numerous foster care services have consistent and serious failings; and the steps she is taking to ensure that these are addressed. [50456/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I welcome HIQA's important work in relation to foster care services, and also the report prepared by the Joint Oireachtas Committee. I will respond to the Committee by year end.

We are in the enviable situation here in Ireland that 92% of children living in care are in foster care placements. This compares very favourably to foster care services overseas. The most recent figures for England show that 74% of children in care were in a foster placement and the figure for Northern Ireland is 80%, for children who were in care for at least 12 months. The vast majority of foster placements are stable, loving, long-term arrangements, where children are nurtured and supported.

By the end of last year, HIQA had inspected all foster care services. The findings showed that, in general, children in foster care were safe, happy, in good health and attending school. For 2017, HIQA focussed on specific standards in more detail. These relate to the checks and balances that Foster Care Committees, and senior managers, should have in place to support a safe and effective service. The child's experience of the service was not assessed during 2017.

This year's inspections show delays in completing formal assessments of relative carers, and the lack of regular reviews of all foster carers. The need for Garda vetting for children over 16 and young adults in the household was also highlighted. There were weaknesses in how some Foster Care Committees are informed about complaints and allegations against foster carers. I am pleased to note that HIQA accepted Tusla's action plans in relation to the inspection reports, and I am monitoring improvements being made.

The clear themes coming through are of the need for better oversight, recruitment of staff, the replenishment and broadening of foster care panels, improved supports and supervision of foster carers.

I am asking Tusla to provide me with a national strategy for the recruitment of foster carers as part of its 2018 business plan, and to build on and improve the assessment and support for foster carers. I have secured additional funding of over €40 million for Tusla to ensure that the business plan can be achieved.

Affordable Childcare Scheme

595. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the position regarding the legislative and ICT infrastructure that will be needed to deliver the single affordable childcare scheme; the date by which this will be delivered; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50457/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Budget 2017 announced a radical redesign of how we deliver support to make quality childcare accessible and affordable for families in Ireland. The new Affordable Childcare Scheme (ACS) will provide financial support for parents towards the cost of childcare. This new Scheme will replace the existing targeted childcare programmes with a single, streamlined and more user-friendly scheme and will include “wraparound” care for pre-school and school-age children. The ambition of this project is immense; its scope matched only in size by its complexity. This scheme aims to reduce poverty, facilitate labour activation, improve outcomes for children and tangibly reduce the cost of childcare for tens of thousands of families.

My Department is currently putting in place the legal and technical infrastructures to underpin the Affordable Childcare Scheme. I am delighted to report that draft legislation to give our new approach a legal backbone is well advanced and publication of a draft Bill is expected before the end of the year.

The building of a state of the art IT system to make subsidised childcare more accessible is also being advanced. The IT development is subject to scrutiny by a peer review group (PRG) at the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO). The project has passed the first stage of the peer review process (reviewing the Business Case) and is close to completing the second stage (Request for Tender Stage).

Whilst delivering the scheme as soon as possible remains a priority, I believe that it is prudent to ensure we get the new systems right, so that they operate smoothly for everyone. Accordingly, in progressing our work, we strive to meet the highest standards available and avoid mistakes made on previous government IT projects. In doing so, we have committed ourselves to extensive consultation and peer review processes.

While intensive work is underway, the project is heavily dependent on timelines beyond its immediate control, such as the advancement of legislation through the Oireachtas. In particular, the timeframe is dependent upon ICT development. Once we have completed the Request for Tender element of the project and have the successful developer in place, we will be able to confirm and communicate a timeline for the full introduction of the scheme. Until then, I am not in a position to make a commitment on the exact launch date of ACS.

We are well on our way to introducing the Affordable Childcare Scheme. In the meantime, the families of 64,000 children or 91% of the children eligible for the measures introduced by my Department are already benefiting from financial support for their childcare, on a par with what will be delivered under the new scheme. This number is increasing daily.

Foster Care

596. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the complaints and appeals mechanisms that are in place for foster care parents who feel that they or their foster child have been treated unfairly or inappropriately by Tusla; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50458/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): In serving the best interest of the child, it is vital that the voices of foster carers and children in care are heard.

Foster carers can raise any issue or provide feedback directly with their link worker in the first instance, and subsequently with team leader or principal social worker, and they may also make representations to their Foster Care Committee. In addition, foster carers can make use of the Tusla, the Child and Family Agency feedback and complaints mechanism, “Tell Us”. All foster carers may also submit a complaint to the Office of the Ombudsman if these mechanisms prove unsatisfactory.

A complaints system for children in care is part of the National Standards for Foster Care. Children coming into care are informed of how to make a complaint, verbally or in writing, and of their right to do so. This can be done directly with their social worker, or with the team leader or principal social worker. Alternatively, children in care can also use Tusla’s “Tell us” process or make their complaint known to the Ombudsman for Children. The child’s social worker, foster carers or advocacy groups often act on the child’s behalf and provide support in making their views known. For example, Empowering People in Care (EPIC) is an independent organisation which works with and advocates on behalf of children and young people in care.

In addition, the Irish Foster Care Association (IFCA) independently advocates on behalf of foster carers, providing support and mediation services as needed in the event of differences that may arise. This includes a support helpline, funded by Tusla, which is available to all foster carers.

Questions Nos. 597 and 598 answered with Question No. 586.

Child Care Services Staff

599. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of child care providers who have been trained as link workers on the new AIMS model launched in June 2016, by county, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50475/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The Leadership for Inclusion (LINC) higher education programme for early years practitioners was established in 2016 as part of the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM), with provision for 900 students annually for four years. It is a Level 6 Special Purpose Award designed to support the inclusion of children with a disability in free pre-school provided under the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme.

Pre-school settings employing an Inclusion Coordinator (who has graduated from LINC and has agreed to take on the relevant role and responsibilities) will receive an increase of €2 per child per week in the rate of ECCE capitation payable to that setting. 847 early years practitioners graduated from the LINC programme in October 2017 and the breakdown by county is given in the table provided:

County	No. Of LINC Graduates
Carlow	11
Cavan	5
Clare	37
Cork	106
Donegal	53
Dublin	127
Galway	38

County	No. Of LINC Graduates
Kerry	53
Kildare	48
Kilkenny	19
Laois	20
Leitrim	8
Limerick	75
Longford	5
Louth	17
Mayo	27
Meath	29
Monaghan	13
Offaly	10
Roscommon	19
Sligo	19
Tipperary	27
Waterford	21
Westmeath	17
Wexford	28
Wicklow	15
Total	847

874 early years practitioners enrolled and commenced the second intake of the LINC programme in September 2017.

Domestic Violence

600. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if her attention has been drawn to grants that are available to domestic abuse victims who are being housed in temporary supported housing which help towards the cost of furnishings and other goods needed for the accommodation; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50497/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, has statutory responsibility for the care and protection of victims of domestic, sexual and gender based violence whether in the context of the family or otherwise. At all times, Tusla's key priority is to ensure that the needs of victims of domestic violence are being met in the best way possible.

In 2017, I provided Tusla with funding of over €22 million for domestic, sexual and gender-based violence services. This represented an increase of €1.5 million over 2016. Arising from Budget 2018, I am pleased to inform the Deputy that a further increase in funding of €1.7 million is being provided to Tusla next year for these services.

Tusla does not provide dedicated grant funding to individuals affected by domestic violence who are residing in temporary accommodation. Tusla funded organisations supporting victims of domestic violence would be aware of the different grants available and would advise clients on making applications. Application for such grants or payments are a matter for the individuals concerned.

I am advised that the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, under the Supplementary Welfare Allowance (SWA) scheme, may make a single Exceptional Needs Payment (ENP) to help meet essential expenditure which a person could not reasonably be expected to meet out of their weekly income. The ENP scheme is demand led and provides assistance to those with exceptional needs, taking into account the requirements of the legislation and all the relevant circumstances of the case in order to ensure that the payments target those most in need of assistance. Any persons who consider that they have an entitlement to an ENP under the Supplementary Welfare Allowance scheme should contact their local Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection INTREO centre.

Early Childhood Care and Education Data

601. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she has examined the data protection issues which could potentially arise from requiring ECCE providers to administer aspects of the various State schemes, such as the financial data of parents; if she has satisfied herself that no issues arise; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50540/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Work is currently underway to introduce a new Affordable Childcare Scheme (ACS) which will provide financial support for parents towards the cost of childcare. The new scheme will provide a system from which both universal and targeted subsidies can be provided towards the cost of childcare. ACS will replace the existing targeted childcare programmes with a single, streamlined and more user-friendly scheme and is intended to provide “wraparound” care for pre-school and school-age children.

Where parents wish to avail of supports they will apply directly to the scheme administrator. In order to make the application process as easy as possible for parents, it is intended that the means-testing will, in most cases, be carried out through an automatic link with income data held by the Revenue Commissioners and by the Department of Social Protection. This means that childcare providers will not be required collect PPS numbers or financial data from parents when registering children on to the Affordable Childcare System.

The use of the PPS number and data sharing across relevant public bodies and agencies will be enabled and supported through legislation and formal data sharing agreements.

The primary legislation will take account of all necessary amendments to existing legislation, including any changes which may be required to the Social Welfare Consolidation Act 2015. Consultations will take place with all relevant parties, as deemed necessary throughout the legislative development process.

Early Childhood Care and Education

602. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if her attention has been drawn to the introduction of a 7% increase in ECCE capitation with effect from September 2017, which represents an increase of €4.50 per week for an ECCE-age child on standard capitation rates (details supplied). [50541/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): As the Deputy will be aware, among a number of measures announced by my Department in Budget 2018, was that from September 2018 capitation paid to Early Years providers for the delivery of the ECCE

programme will increase by 7% on both the standard and higher rates. This increase will result in the following:

- Standard capitation rate will increase from €64.50 to €69 per child per week
- Higher capitation rate will increase from €75 to €80.25 per child per week

This increase in capitation acknowledges the need to improve conditions for the early years workforce, thereby supporting the recruitment and retention of high quality staff, and facilitating the continued delivery of high quality services to children. I acknowledge the fact that employers need this additional investment to enable them to improve the wages of their employees. This measure should assist providers in this endeavour and it is something that I am committed to building in the future budgets

It should be noted that the ECCE programme is a standalone pre-school programme and the capitation increase is payable to those providers who are delivering this programme.

The 'September Measures' relate to the introduction of the Community Childcare Subvention Universal (CCSU) payment and an increase in band rates across the different strands of the Community Childcare Subvention (CCS) Scheme and the Training and Employment Childcare (TEC) Scheme. These measures include a Universal payment of €80 per month for 0 – 3 yr olds registered with childcare providers, together with an average 50% increase to the band rates of the CCS/CCSP targeted schemes. It is anticipated that these measures will result in significant improvements to the operating circumstances of childcare providers.

Early Childhood Care and Education

603. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs her strategy to increase investment to all services and especially to children under three years of age, in view of the fact that this can be the most labour intensive and resource heavy area; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50542/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): As the Deputy will be aware the measures that I introduced as part of Budget 2018 demonstrate my continued commitment to increasing investment in services for children including those children under 3 years of age. From September 2018 all children will be entitled to a full two years of the ECCE scheme or free preschool, as it has become known. This further enhancement delivers fully on a commitment in the Programme for a Partnership Government that is good for children, families and Early Years providers. I also announced investment to continue the childcare affordability measures introduced last September that are already benefitting 45,000 children, with 24,000 of these registered so far for the universal under-3 scheme, and 21,000 registered for the targeted schemes. The additional funding will ensure that the door remains open for further children and families to register and benefit from these subsidies throughout 2018. I have also recently commissioned an Independent Review of the Cost of delivering Quality Childcare which will assist me in seeking more investment for childcare over the coming years.

The introduction in September 2017 of the universal payment for under 3s (and for children who are aged 3 but do not yet qualify for entry into the ECCE Programme) addresses the issue where children under 3 years of age were the only age group of pre-school children for which no other universal State support for care and education was previously available, given that children aged 3 and older can participate in the ECCE Programme or school. The universal payment is a contribution towards the cost of childcare for under 3 years of age, given that many parents require full-time childcare for this age group. The Affordable Childcare Scheme,

which will replace the existing childcare schemes, will provide for a continuation of this universal payment for childcare. In addition, it will for the first time provide higher payments for targeted subsidies for children under 3 years of age than for older age groups (and the highest subsidies for children under 1 year old), to reflect the higher cost of provision for this age group, given the regulatory requirements on adult-child ratios. Let me also add that the issues facing childcare providers in the provision of services to under 3 years of age is one also being considered by a subgroup of the Early Years Forum.

As part of Budget 2018, I have also secured a 5.7% increase in funding for Tusla in 2018 which amounts €40.6m. The extra funding will be used to progress a number of key priorities including the introduction of mandatory reporting under *Children First* , addressing gaps in out of hours services and further investing in Family Resource Centres that deliver services to families in disadvantaged areas across the country. The additional investment will allow Tusla to recruit over 300 staff to respond to areas of identified risk and to meet increased demand for services. This includes resources for responding to expected increases in referrals following the introduction of mandatory reporting; management of unallocated cases and developing aftercare services. It will also allow for improvements in Tusla's ICT systems and overall organisational structures, including governance.

Affordable Childcare Scheme

604. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the reason the administration and management of the affordable childcare scheme is being devolved into ECCE providers that are already overburdened with administration paperwork resulting in the requirement to report to at least three Departments or agencies (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50543/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I am aware that some providers have expressed concerns around the administration of these new measures, I announced in recent months payments totalling €3.5 million towards programme supports payments for all childcare providers who register for the enhanced childcare measures (these payments will be made in December 2017). This, in addition to €14.5m that has been already paid to childcare services so far in 2017 in recognition of the administration associated with the childcare schemes, provides for €18m in programme supports payments this year.

The purpose of the programme supports payment is to contribute towards the costs of the wide range of non-face-to-face work with children carried out by providers, particularly the additional administration involved in changes to the childcare schemes in 2016/2017 including:

- Time of provider required to familiarise themselves with new Grant Agreements;
- The expansion of the ECCE scheme to include three intake points;
- More Affordable Childcare measures introduced in September 2017;
- Participation in information events, consulting with City/County Childcare Committees (CCCs), and advisors associated with the childcare provider's business (e.g. accountants, legal);
- Attending training sessions with the CCCs / Pobal on the schemes and PIP;
- Speaking to parents about the schemes and answering their questions;

- Administrative time to, for example, sign contracts and engage with Pobal's IT system (PIP), register children on PIP, meet statutory obligations re data holding, make changes to published fee schedules as required by Pobal;

- Following up with parents who have not provided necessary documentation;

- Verifying children's attendance and meeting compliance obligations for all universal and targeted scheme beneficiaries.

The value of the payment is equivalent to an additional seven days funding for services.

I would also like to highlight that when my Department prepares for each programme cycle, we try to appropriately balance the need to account for public monies with the administrative burden this places on childcare providers. We will continue to work towards the most efficient system in this regard balanced against those key requirements as it is important that appropriate governance and compliance standards are met.

Departmental Funding

605. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the extent to which she and bodies or groups under her aegis have received or are scheduled to receive supportive funding from her Department, with specific reference to youth organisations, bodies dealing with children at risk or others; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50557/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The overall budget for the Youth Sector in 2017 is €57.4 million in current expenditure, this funding supports the delivery of a range of youth work programmes and services for all young people, including those from disadvantaged communities, by the voluntary youth work sector.

The following are the main services and projects currently supported through grant aid:

Services and Projects	Amount Allocated
Youth Service Grant Scheme - currently funding 30 national and major regional voluntary organisations. The continued funding of voluntary youth organisations through the Scheme is intended to ensure the emergence, promotion, growth and development of youth organisations with distinctive philosophies and programmes aimed at the social education of young people.	€10.65m allocated in 2017
Special Projects for Youth - grant-aid is made available in respect of out-of-school projects for disadvantaged young people. Priority is given to projects in the spheres of special youth work initiatives, young homeless people, young people at risk of substance abuse and young travellers.	€14.7m allocated in 2017 (171 Projects)

Services and Projects	Amount Allocated
Young Peoples Facilities and Services Funds Rounds 1 & 2 – this fund was established by the Government in 1998 to assist in the development of preventative strategies in a targeted manner through the development of youth facilities, including sports and recreational facilities, and services in disadvantaged areas where a significant drug problem exists or has the potential to develop.	83 mainstreamed projects (Round 1)140 current projects (Round 2)€18.85m allocated in 2017
Local Youth Club Grant Scheme - supports youth work activities at a local level. These grants are made available to all youth clubs and groups through local ETBs.	1,400 youth groups/clubs eligible€1.17m allocated in 2017
Youth Information Centres - This programme funds 20 Youth Information Centres. The purpose of these Centres is to provide young people with access to information on rights, opportunities, benefits, health, welfare and other matters.	€1.28m allocated in 2017
Local Drug Task Force Projects - Responsibility for 21 youth related projects transferred to the Department in 2011. These projects, targeting young people under the various pillars of the National Drugs Strategy, provide a range of supports for young people by way of targeted drug prevention and awareness programmes as well as referrals.	€1.18m allocated in 2017

Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, which deals with children at risk will receive a 5.7% increase of €40.6m for 2018, higher than the €37m increase provided in 2017. The extra funding will be used to progress a number of key priorities including the introduction of mandatory reporting under *Children First*, addressing gaps in out of hours services and further investing in Family Resource Centres that deliver services to families in disadvantaged areas across the country. The additional investment will allow Tusla to recruit over 300 staff to respond to areas of identified risk and to meet increased demand for services. This includes resources for responding to expected increases in referrals following the introduction of mandatory reporting; management of unallocated cases and developing aftercare services. It will also allow for improvements in Tusla's ICT systems and overall organisational structures, including governance.

Departmental Budgets

606. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the extent to which she remains satisfied regarding the adequacy of resources available to her Department to meet all contingencies in the course of 2018; if particular issues of concern have been identified; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50558/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Budget 2018 made provision for a gross funding provision of €1.384 billion to my Department in 2018. This represents an increase of €73 million or 6% over the allocation for 2017. The Deputy might note

that the Revised Estimates for Public Services 2018 will be published by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in the near future. This will set out the full particulars of the financial resources made available to Vote 40 of my Department in 2018 to support the provision of a range of targetted programmes and services for children, young people and their families. The publication also contains details of the number of public service employees associated with the delivery of the programmes and services.

I am satisfied that the significant additional resources secured for 2018 will allow my Department and its agencies build on the good work by all involved in working with children and families to deliver on this Government's commitment to fundamentally reform the delivery of services.

Departmental Staff

607. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she is satisfied regarding the adequacy of the staffing levels available to and through her Department to meet all anticipated requirements in the course of 2018; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50559/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Since my appointment as Minister, my Department's staffing complement has grown from 181 to 241 people, with a further cohort currently being recruited which will bring the total staffing numbers to around 280 people before end 2018. The increase in staffing numbers reflects the continuing growth in the responsibilities of my Department, whose allocation will grow to €1.38 billion in 2018 following increases in the two Budgets since I took office.

As additional streams of work emerge in my Department, it is inevitable that, from time to time, temporary staffing shortfalls may occur. These are remedied at the earliest opportunity. I am satisfied that the workload required from my Department will be adequately resourced in 2018.

Children in Care

608. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of children in residential care; the extent to which such numbers have fluctuated in the past five years; the age profile of such children; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50560/17]

609. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of children and their age profile in foster homes; the extent to which these numbers have fluctuated over the past five years; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50561/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I propose to take Questions Nos. 608 and 609 together.

Tusla, the Child and Family Agency have advised that as of the end of August 2017, there were 6,237 children in care. There were 4,056 children in general foster care, 1,684 in relative foster care and 362 in residential care. 135 children were in other forms of care suited to their individual needs and situations.

Children in care by year (2013-2017)

Table 1 is based on Tusla's Reviews of Adequacy reports and Quarterly Reports. The numbers of children in care for 2017 is the figure as of the end of August, and includes Separated Children Seeking Asylum. Prior to January 2017, these children were not included in the overall figure.

Table 1

2013	2014	2015	2016	2017 (To end August)
6,469	6,454	6,384	6,258	6,297

Children in care by age

Table 2 is based on Tusla's Review of Adequacy. These reports review services provided by the HSE prior to the establishment of Tusla in 2014. Children in care before 2014 were in the care of the HSE. The Reviews of Adequacy of HSE services are published on the Tusla website. The figures on children in care are prior to 2014 are presented as age ranges.

Table 2

-	0-8	9-13	14-17
2011	37%	32%	31%
2012	36%	33%	31%
2013	37%	33%	31%

Services provided by Tusla

Table 3 is based on Tusla's Reviews of Adequacy, published annually on the Tusla website. The figures are presented year-on-year.

Table 3

Age	<1	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
2014	2.2%	2.9%	3.5%	4%	4.2%	4.7%	4.9%	5%	5%	5.7%	6.1%	6.4%	6.9%	7.1%	7.3%	7.9%	7.5%	8.2%
2015	1.9%	2.6%	3.1%	3.8%	4.4%	4.7%	4.9%	5.2%	5.2%	5.4%	5.9%	6.6%	6.6%	7.4%	7.4%	7.8%	8.1%	8.4%

Child Abuse

610. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the extent to which instances of child abuse of a physical, mental or sexual nature have been brought to her Department's attention since it was established; if the issues have been satisfactorily and conclusively investigated; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50562/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The Deputy will be aware that Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, was established on the 1st January 2014. Tusla have provided a breakdown of the referrals they have received in the years 2014, 2015 and 2016, which is included in tabular format. In addition I include data as published on Tusla's website for quarter 1 2017. It should be noted that multiple referrals may be received that relate to the same child. The Deputy will notice from the table below that the vast majority of referrals are for emotional abuse and neglect, possibly indicating abuse within the family setting.

Each referral received by Tusla is assessed and dealt with on an individual basis by the relevant social work team. Approximately 60% of referrals to Tusla are of a child welfare concern with the remaining 40% related to child protection concerns. Tusla's policy is to refer child

welfare referrals to relevant family and community support services. At any stage, if a determination is made that there is abuse, whether physical, emotional, sexual or neglect, from which there is an ongoing risk of harm, the child protection pathway is followed. In a minority of cases this may lead to the child being placed on the Child Protection Notification System (CPNS) or the child being received into care.

Upon receipt of an appropriate referral, the Duty Social Worker carries out preliminary enquiries, including checking to see if the case is already open or known to child protection services, clarifies the nature of the concern, contacts key professionals, e.g. public health nurses or teachers, and records the details of the child and family. It is possible that duplicate referrals have been received, or that the child involved is already receiving a service from Tusla, or that the child needs another service such as, for instance, the HSE's Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service. If the threshold for a child protection assessment or response is not met but a child has an unmet need then this may be addressed as a child welfare concern by local family and community support services, organised through the Local Area Pathways team.

A referral becomes an open case (one per child) when it meets the criteria to need an initial assessment. Based on the information available, the referral will be given a priority level of high, medium and low. Open cases also include children receiving a social work service or who have been received into care.

The additional €40m funding which has been secured for Tusla in the 2018 Budget will support the continued implementation of child protection services. Tusla aims to provide a proportionate and timely response to children at risk or in need. Where appropriate, responsibility and control will be shared with families and communities by developing joint solutions and through inter-agency collaboration.

Child Protection referrals made to Tusla by category 2014 - 2016

-	2014	2015	2016	Q1 2017
All Referrals	43,630	43,596	47,399	13,344
Child Protection Referrals	18,676	18,235	19,087	5,458
By Category:				
Physical Abuse	4,066	3,991	4,450	1,394
Emotional Abuse	6,233	6,535	6,870	1,896
Sexual Abuse	3,114	2,940	3,042	921
Neglect	5,263	4,769	4,724	1,247

Children in Care

611. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the extent to which her Department monitors the well-being of children in residential or foster care on an ongoing basis; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50563/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, has a statutory duty under the Child Care Act 1991 to promote the welfare of children who are not receiving adequate care and protection, and if necessary, to receive a child into the care of the State.

The placement of children in care is governed by Regulations. These provide for the welfare

of the child, the care practices, care records, accommodation and safety precautions. Children, depending on their identified needs, may be placed by their social worker in foster care either with relatives or general foster carers, in residential care or other placement types. The majority of children are placed in long term stable placements and currently over 92% of children are placed in foster care. A key part of the social worker role is to ensure the quality and safety of the child's placement, and to meet with the child on a one to one basis on all visits. There are safeguards surrounding each child care placement, whether foster or residential care and placements are supervised by a professionally qualified social worker.

All foster care services and statutory residential centres are subject to inspection by the Health Information Quality Authority (HIQA) and private and voluntary residential centres are inspected by Tusla against National Standards. These inspection reports of children's residential centres, fostering services and child protection services are also reviewed and analysed by my officials. The overview of these reports provides me with a level of assurance on the overall capacity of Tusla to identify and provide services to families and children.

Within its national office, Tusla, has a dedicated Quality Assurance Team. This team produces monthly, quarterly and annual reports in respect of Tusla's functions, including detailed reporting on child safety and protection services. Tusla also provides me with information on children in care, their placement type, care status and allocation of social workers. Within my Department there is a Unit which scrutinises these reports and briefs me and senior officials on issues of note. The reports also provide statistical evidence of improvements to child welfare and protection services and highlights challenges and areas where further improvement is required, such as the recruitment of additional social workers.

Officials from my Department meet Tusla management on a regular basis to review the level of service provision, including areas in need of improvement. I myself meet on a regular basis with the CEO and Chair of Tusla. Contact is maintained with non-governmental bodies on issues within the sector, including, for example, the Children's Rights Alliance, EPIC and the Irish Foster Care Association.

The Deputy should also be aware that children in care have access to independent advocacy supports, such as the organisation Empowering People in Care (EPIC). Children in care also have access to the complaints mechanism in Tusla, and may make complaints, or be assisted to make complaints, about their care to the Office of the Ombudsman for Children.

Child and Family Agency

612. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the degree to which a rapid response exists in cases of incidents of children at risk brought to the attention of her Department; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50564/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, deals immediately with emergency cases, including for instance, if a child has been abandoned or is in immediate physical danger or at immediate risk of sexual abuse. Social work duty teams keep high priority cases under review by regularly checking to ascertain risk to the child, and where necessary will reprioritise the case.

It is important to note that if a child is at immediate risk or in danger, the Gardaí should be alerted without delay. Under the Child Care Act 1991, as amended, Gardaí have the power to remove, without a warrant, a child in immediate danger to a place of safety when it is not possible to seek an emergency care order from the Courts. Tusla's local offices and out of hours

contact number provides social work advice and support for Gardaí around the clock.

Where the child has been removed by Gardaí or risk is not immediate, Tusla can go directly to the Courts for an Emergency Care Order to bring the child into care. The Courts, as part of proceedings, can also provide a warrant to Gardaí to support social workers and Gardaí may remove the child, by force if necessary. Once the child is in a place of relative safety, Tusla social workers can carry out a fuller assessment and put in place steps to support the child to reunify with their family, to put in place a child protection plan, or to receive the child into care. Where a child has a child protection plan they are listed as active on the Child Protection Notification System. This information helps social workers determine if a child who comes to their attention is already considered at risk. If sufficient progress is not being made in the plan, a child may be received into care, on a voluntary basis or by applying to the courts for a care order.

Tusla, holds the statutory responsibility for child welfare and protection, and is the appropriate body to receive reports of concerns relating to children at risk. Each referral received by the Agency is assessed and dealt with on an individual basis by the relevant social work team. Every report of concern for the safety and well-being of a child is assessed and required action is identified.

I have been very pleased to have secured an additional €40m for Tusla in Budget 2018 - which will allow for the continued recruitment and expansion of Tusla social work, social care, family support and business support staff. In addition to recruitment, I glad to say that this budget has also provided for enhancing early intervention pathways, as it includes funding for the establishment of an additional 11 Family Resource Centres.

Child and Family Agency Funding

613. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the extent to which she and her Department continues to grant aid to organisations involved in caring for children at risk; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50565/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, has responsibility for grant programmes covering Child Welfare and Protection, the School Completion Programme, and Family and Community Support, all of which provide supports for children and young people at risk. Grants are issued to service providers that work in conjunction with Tusla, as well as local school completion projects and voluntary organisations.

The total expenditure in grants paid by Tusla in 2016 came to €143.9m. The precise amount of 2017 funding will be confirmed by year end. My Department supports the work of Tusla in providing these grants to community and service providers working with children at risk. Tusla will continue to support voluntary bodies that carry out this important work in 2018 and into the future.

Child Care Legislation

614. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the degree to which her Department offers support to undocumented families, with particular reference to children that might be at risk; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50566/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The Child Care

Act, 1991 applies to all children resident in the State irrespective of their immigration status. Under the Child Care Act, 1991 and the Child and Family Agency Act 2013, Tusla has a duty to promote the welfare of children who are not receiving adequate care or protection. The Agency is obliged to provide care for these children for as long as their welfare requires it. Tusla operates under the principle of equity of care.

Children First National Guidance (2011) gives advice for notifying Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, of situations where abuse is suspected. A range of professionals including teachers, nurses, early years educators, Gardaí and other health professionals, who see children regularly, are in a good position to identify children at risk. Where someone has reasonable grounds for suspecting a child is being, or has been, abused, they are expected to immediately contact Tusla.

The Children First Act, 2015 places a statutory obligation on key professionals (mandated persons) to report concerns of harm above a defined threshold to Tusla without delay. These provisions will be commenced on December 11th, this year.

If a child is taken into care, their needs are given priority. A social worker is assigned to a child placed in State care and has a duty to prepare and regularly review the care plan for the child. Intrinsic to this process is ensuring that the wishes of the child are listened to, and if appropriate, Tusla may assist them in establishing residency.

Unaccompanied asylum seeking children are placed in care and have their needs assessed, and are allocated a social worker.

Children who, with their parents, live in Direct Provision, are provided with welfare supports as required. Tusla have seconded an experienced social worker to the Department of Justice and Equality to liaise directly between Direct Provision and Tusla services.

Child and Family Agency Services

615. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the extent to which her Department continues to monitor children and families at risk with a view to averting incidents of self harm; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50567/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Under the Child and Family Agency Act, 2013, Tusla, the Child and Family Agency is required to support and promote the development, welfare and protection of children. Tusla provides family support services to children and families when a need is identified. These services can be provided directly by Tusla through its family support services, social work or social care services, or through play and other therapies as appropriate.

Key elements of the support provided to children at risk of self harm may include referral and advocacy for access to specialist services to meet the child's needs, for example counselling and psychology services. Mental health policy is under the remit of my colleague the Minister for Health. However, Tusla works closely with other care providers, including the Health Service Executive (HSE), in respect of access to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). Tusla and the HSE monitor their interagency responsibilities to ensure that they are working effectively in the best interests of children and families.

Tusla will continue to strive to meet the requirements of the children and families they serve, and I will continue to support them in doing so.

Counselling Services Provision

616. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the extent to which she remains satisfied regarding the adequacy of the counselling services available through her Department to children and families at risk; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50568/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Under the Child and Family Agency Act, 2013, Tusla, the Child and Family Agency is required to support and promote the development, welfare and protection of children. Tusla provides funding to voluntary organisations offering a range of counselling and support services to children and families including:

- Marriage and relationship counselling,
- Child counselling,
- Rainbows Peer Support Programme for children,
- Bereavement counselling and support on the death of a family member.

In addition to direct service provision, Tusla provides grant aid to community and voluntary agencies for the provision of a wide range of family support services.

Tusla provides funding to the Barnardos Children's Bereavement Service, which works to support children and families coping with death. This includes a bereavement telephone helpline and a skilled therapeutic service that supports children, especially in relation to complicated grief and traumatic loss.

Tusla also supports Rainbows Ireland, which provides group based support to children dealing with loss following parental separation /divorce or a death. The Rainbows programme is currently delivered in schools and community-based centres around the country.

Childhood bereavement is an area of special focus for Tusla. Together with the Irish Hospice Foundation, Tusla co-funds the Irish Childhood Bereavement Network, which works to improve awareness of and support for bereaved children.

Tusla is currently developing an integrated service model for the provision of therapy services relating to the psychological welfare of children and their families which supports and informs front line practitioners in their day to day work with children and families as well as providing multidisciplinary therapeutic services which can address more complex needs.

Community Therapy Services will include therapeutic services to children and families in the community and in care placements; assessment, consultation and/or intervention services in for children at significant risk of placement in secure settings; therapeutic support for professionals including residential care staff and foster carers in their ongoing work with young people and their families; and expert court reports.

Mental health policy is under the remit of my colleague the Minister for Health, and Tusla works closely with other care providers including the Health Service Executive (HSE), in respect of access to child and adolescent mental health services.

The protection and welfare of children and young people is of great concern to me, and I will continue to support Tusla in assisting children and young people at risk.

In this context, I announced a significant increase in the funding allocation to Tusla for next

year. Tusla will have available to it some €753 million in funding, representing an increase of over €40 million over 2017. The precise level of funding to be provided to counselling, therapy and support services will be considered by Tusla in developing its Business Plan for 2018.

Preschool Services

617. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the amount of funding that has been allocated to levels 4 to 7 of the access and inclusion model between September 2016 and September 2017. [50656/17]

618. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the amount of funding that has been allocated to levels 4 to 7 of the access and inclusion model to date in 2017. [50657/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I propose to take Questions Nos. 617 and 618 together.

AIM supports children with disabilities to reap the full benefits of free pre-school education. Its goal is to empower pre-school providers to deliver an inclusive pre-school experience. AIM is a child-centred and evidence-based model, involving seven levels of progressive support, moving from the universal to the targeted, based on the needs of the child and the pre-school setting.

AIM was launched in June 2016. Funding is allocated to AIM on an annual basis. Funding allocated in 2016 and 2017 to levels 4, 5 and 7 of AIM by my Department is set out below. Funding for AIM Level 6 comes from the Department of Health Vote.

Level	Element of model	2016	2017
-	-	(m*)	(m*)
-	-	Allocation	Allocation
4	Expert Early Years Educational Advice and Support	5.4	10.1
5	Equipment, Appliances and Minor Alterations Grants and application process	1.61	2.5
6	Therapeutic Intervention	-	-
7	Additional Assistance in the Pre-School Room and Application Process	5.43	14.1

*Figures rounded to the nearest thousand.

Foireann Roinne

619. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Leanaí agus Gnóthaí Óige cén líon iomlán foirne atá fostaithe ina Roinn faoi láthair; cé mhéid post atá daingnithe nó aitheanta ag an Roinn (i scéim teanga, nó ar aon bhealach eile) mar phoist a bhfuil riachtanas Gaeilge ag baint leo; cé mhéid duine atá ann ag a bhfuil líofacht i nGaeilge agus atá ag feidhmiú sna poist sin atá daingnithe nó aitheanta mar phoist a bhfuil riachtanas Gaeilge ag baint leo; an bhfuil sí beartaithe ag an tráth seo aon phost eile de chuid na Roinne a aithint mar phoist a bhfuil riachtanas Gaeilge. [50676/17]

620. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Leanaí agus Gnóthaí Óige cé mhéid folúntas a líonadh ina Roinn ó thús na bliana seo; cé mhéid de na folúntais sin a bhain le poist

a bhí sainaitheanta mar phoist a raibh Gaeilge riachtanach ina leith; cé mhéid folúntas atá le líonadh faoi láthair agus cé mhéid de na folúntais siúd atá sainaitheanta mar fholúntais a bhfuil riachtanas Gaeilge ag baint leo. [50693/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I propose to take Questions Nos. 619 and 620 together.

Ag tús 2017, bhí 188 ball foirne i mo Roinn. Tá 241 fostaí ann anois. Dhá cheann de na folúntais bhreise a líonadh, baineadh úsáid as sruthanna Ghaeilge de chuid chomórtais na Seirbhíse um Cheapacháin Phoiblí chun feabhais a chur ar sholáthar seirbhíse na Gaeilge i mo Roinn. Tá Gaeilge líofa ag an mbeirt fhostaithe sin. Cé nach bhfuil tuilleadh pleananna ann faoi láthair chun breis foirne a earcú ó shruthanna Ghaeilge, leanfaidh mo Roinn ar aghaidh ag déanamh measúnú ar a riachtanais i dtaobh seo.

Departmental Funding

621. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development if the funding from his Department in conjunction with Dublin City Council, for the Dublin City Community Co-operative Society will be retained or increased in 2018 and beyond to ensure the continuation of a vital project (details supplied). [49876/17]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): I assume that the Deputy is referring to transitional funding provided by my Department to the Dublin Inner City Community Co-operative Society on behalf of its members including the organisation referred to. I am aware of the issues regarding the transitional funding arrangements in place since 2015. I wish to confirm that my Department officials have met with officials from Dublin City Council and have agreed a plan in relation to Quarter 1, 2018, transitional funding. Logistical arrangements, including terms and conditions, will be communicated to the stakeholders shortly.

Vacancies on State Boards

622. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the number of vacancies in each State board under the aegis of his Department, in tabular form. [49942/17]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): Four state bodies fall under the remit of my Department, Pobal, Irish Water Safety, the Western Development Commission and the Charities Regulatory Authority. The table outlines the current vacancies on each State Board:

State Board	No. of vacancies
Pobal	0
Irish Water Safety	0
Western Development Commission	0
Charities Regulatory Authority	3

Further information on the membership of State Boards can be found at the website www.stateboards.ie.

Appointments to State Boards Data

623. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the names of persons he has appointed to each State board under the aegis of his Department that have not come from the Public Appointments Service list of suitable candidates, in tabular form. [50004/17]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): Four state bodies fall under the remit of my Department, Pobal, Irish Water Safety, the Western Development Commission and the Charities Regulatory Authority.

I have not appointed any Board members to a State board under the aegis of my Department that have not been in line with the Public Appointments Service guidelines.

Departmental Funding

624. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development if a grant will be awarded to an organisation (details supplied) in order to enable it continue to participate in tidy district competitions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50025/17]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The 60th anniversary of the TidyTowns competition will take place in 2018. In order to celebrate this milestone and to mark the invaluable work carried out by generations of TidyTowns volunteers in their own communities, I recently announced a €1.4 million grant scheme to assist committees with their preparations for the upcoming competition in 2018.

The scheme will allow each local committee which has entered the competition in any of the past 3 years to apply for a grant of between €1,000 and €4,000 to support the work they do. The level of grant will be based on each town or area's category under the TidyTowns competition criteria.

Pobal is administering the grant scheme on behalf of my Department. I have written to all eligible committees - including the group referred to by the Deputy - and advised them of the grant availability and how it may be applied for. In order to obtain this once-off grant payment, the group concerned should complete, sign and return the acceptance form to Pobal by 15th December 2017.

Ministerial Communications

625. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development if he has used a private email account to send or receive official documents or positions on Brexit; and if so, the details of this correspondence. [50065/17]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): I have not used a private email account to send or receive official documents or positions on Brexit.

Departmental Bodies Data

626. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the bodies under the aegis his Department to which it provides in excess of €1 million funding per

annum; the public funding received by these bodies; the bodies in which 50% or more of their income comes from public sources; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50121/17]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): I assume the Deputy is referring to funding provided in 2017 however where these figures are not available, the most recent available figures are given i.e. 2016.

My Department provides funding in excess of €1 million per annum to the four state bodies which fall under its remit - Pobal, the Western Development Commission, Irish Water Safety, and the Charities Regulatory Authority.

The following table outlines the 2017 allocation to each body and states the bodies where 50% or more of its income comes from public sources:

State Body	Allocation	Year	=50% or >50% income comes from public sources
Pobal	€451.6m	2016	Yes
Western Development Commission	€2.412m	2017	Yes
Irish Water Safety	€1.075m	2017	Yes
Charities Regulatory Authority	€4.379m	2017	Y

Departmental Contracts Data

627. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the public contracts between his Department and companies (details supplied) in each of the years 2011 to 2016; the value of each contract; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50407/17]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): My Department has not used the services of the companies concerned.

Foireann Roinne

628. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Forbartha Tuaithe agus Pobail cén líon iomlán foirne atá fostaithe ina Roinn faoi láthair; cé mhéid post atá daingnithe nó aitheanta ag an Roinn (i scéim teanga, nó ar aon bhealach eile) mar phoist a bhfuil riachtanas Gaeilge ag baint leo; cé mhéid duine atá ann ag a bhfuil líofacht i nGaeilge agus atá ag feidhmiú sna poist sin atá daingnithe nó aitheanta mar phoist a bhfuil riachtanas Gaeilge ag baint leo; an bhfuil sé beartaithe ag an tráth seo aon phost eile de chuid na Roinne a aithint mar phoist a bhfuil riachtanas Gaeilge. [50688/17]

629. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Forbartha Tuaithe agus Pobail cé mhéid folúntas a líonadh ina Roinn ó thús na bliana seo; cé mhéid de na folúntais sin a bhain le poist a bhí sainaitheanta mar phoist a raibh Gaeilge riachtanach ina leith; cé mhéid folúntas atá le líonadh faoi láthair agus cé mhéid de na folúntais siúd atá sainaitheanta mar fholúntais a bhfuil riachtanas Gaeilge ag baint leo. [50705/17]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): I propose to take Questions Nos. 628 and 629 together.

Bunaíodh an Roinn Forbhartha Tuaithe agus Pobail ar an 19ú mí Iúil 2017. Faoi láthair, tá 122 fostaithe sa roinn. Fostaíodh 28 oibrithe ó bhunú an roinn. Tá 42 oibrithe breise fostaithe ag an Rialálaí Carthanacht.

Tá earcaíocht ar siúl faoi láthair le haghaidh folúntas bhreise.

Níl aon poist sa roinn agus baint riachtanach ag an Gaeilge leis, áfach, aithníonn an roinn an cúram chun seirbhísí áirithe a chur ar fáil don phobal trí Ghaeilge. Tá roinnt daoine sa roinn agus is féidir leo déileáil le freagracht agus fiafraí trí Ghaeilge, de réir mar is gá.

Money Advice and Budgeting Service Administration

630. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if she will address a matter (details supplied) regarding the restructuring of MABS; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50132/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Citizens Information Board (CIB), which has statutory responsibility for the Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS) and the Citizens Information Services (CIS) decided, on 15th February 2017, to restructure the governance arrangements of these services.

The decision taken reduces the number of local CIS and MABS company boards from ninety three to a sixteen regional boards structure, comprising eight CIS boards and eight MABS boards. CIB has taken this operational decision following years of analysis of options and a detailed consultation period with all stakeholders on the need for a more streamlined governance model. The changes are being made at local company board level only. The valuable work carried out by employees and volunteers working in CIS services and employees of MABS services will continue as heretofore.

The Citizens Information Board is committed to the principle of local involvement in service delivery and has already held discussions on proposed new Local Advisory Committees. CIB is committed to giving this matter further attention, through the Implementation Group's work, to devise a strategy to embed an effective and supportive network to ensure that the long standing, helpful, local linkages are not lost under the new governance arrangements.

With regard to membership of the new regional boards, CIB has committed to apply modern best practice and fairness in its selection and recruiting methods, in line with best practice guidelines developed by the Public Appointments Service. Existing Board members of local CIS and MABS companies will also have an opportunity to express their interest in joining the new regional boards.

I am informed that Kerry MABS is included in the initial phase of the restructuring process in the South Munster region. I am also informed that as the restructuring process progresses, all CIS and MABS services will be requested to commence gathering the information required to facilitate what is known as the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employees) (TUPE) process for employees and the transfer of business assets/liabilities.

It is the intention of CIB to provide information and support through the transitional period, and in this regard, information sessions are being organised for Chairpersons of local services, providing an opportunity for Chairpersons to seek clarifications on the process of transfer to the new regional companies and wind up of the existing companies.

While cost savings was never a key aim of the restructuring of governance arrangements by

the CIB, the transition will not be without cost to the Exchequer. It is nonetheless necessary in order to achieve the appropriate standards of accountability expected from 100% publicly funded services. The aim of the change remains to improve existing governance arrangements and to optimise the benefits from operating a more modern and streamlined citizen-focused delivery model.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

EU Agreements

631. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if the European Pillar of Social Rights is binding. [49849/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): On 26 April 2017, the European Commission published its proposals on the next stage of the European Pillar of Social Rights in the form of an ‘Inter-Institutional Proclamation’ to be signed by the Presidents of the Council, the Commission and the European Parliament. The signing ceremony was held at the EU Social Summit for Fair Jobs and Growth in Gothenburg which I attended with the Taoiseach on 17 November.

The European Pillar of Rights is a political commitment at EU level to ensuring social rights keep pace with the fiscal and monetary progress made under Economic and Monetary Union. The Government is fully supportive of the principles set out in the Interinstitutional Proclamation.

The Proclamation is a political, rather than a legal document. The European Commission shares this view, referring to the Proclamation as a ‘compass’ for future actions rather than a legally binding instrument.

The Interinstitutional Proclamation is an important political commitment which provides guidance to Member States and the EU institutions. Its aim is to ensure that we have a social system which is robust in the face of 21st century challenges such as globalisation and the changing nature of work. We look forward to advancing this ambitious agenda.

Invalidity Pension Appeals

632. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if she will expedite an appeal for an invalidity pension for a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [49858/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): Invalidity pension (IP) is a payment for people who are permanently incapable of work because of illness or incapacity and who satisfy the pay related social insurance (PRSI) contribution conditions.

The department received a claim for IP for the gentleman concerned on 28 June 2017. He was refused IP on the grounds that the medical conditions for the scheme were not satisfied. He was notified on the 16 August 2017 of this decision, the reasons for it and of his right of review and appeal.

Following the submission of additional evidence by the gentleman in question, the case was reviewed by a deciding officer but the decision to disallow IP was upheld. He appealed the

decision to the independent Social Welfare Appeals Office (SWAO). An appeals officer (AO), having taken all available information into account, upheld the department's decision and disallowed the appeal. He was notified of the decision of the AO on 09 November 2017.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Social Welfare Payments Administration

633. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of persons who have had sanctions imposed on their social protection payments in the past five years to date in 2017; the number of persons disqualified from receiving payments for the same period of time, by payment and by year; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [49883/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): This PQ is being answered in the context of Jobseekers Activation.

To qualify for a jobseeker payment, a person must meet certain conditions, including the requirement to be available for, capable of and genuinely seeking full-time work. A range of sanctions, including disqualification, closure or disallowance of the jobseeker claim, may be imposed where a client fails to meet the stated conditions. A jobseeker claim may be reviewed at any time in order to establish continued entitlement. Jobseekers may be disallowed entitlement to a Jobseeker's payment if they are not available for or genuinely seeking work.

In addition, the activation process requires jobseekers to attend group or individual meetings, and/or avail of suitable education, training or development opportunities, or specified employment programmes, which are considered appropriate to the individual person's circumstances. Sanctions/penalties may be imposed in the form of reduced payments where jobseekers fail, without good cause, to comply with activation measures. Jobseekers who refuse to engage with services, refuse an appropriate offer of training or education, or do not attend meetings, can have their payment reduced by up to €44 a week (introduced in April 2011).

Strengthened sanctions were introduced in July 2013 to provide for a disqualification from payment for a period of up to 9 weeks, in circumstances where a jobseeker who has had a penalty rate imposed for 21 days, continues to fail to engage. The normal rate of payment may be reinstated at any time, if the jobseeker complies, as requested, with the activation measures.

The total numbers of penalty rates applied (includes reduced rate and 9 week disqualifications), from 2012 to Oct 2017 are indicated in the following table. A breakdown by scheme (JA/JB) or by penalty rate is not available.

Year	No. of Penalty Rates applied
2012	1,519
2013	3,395
2014	5,325
2015	6,743
2016	10,867
2017 to end Oct	14,637

Fuel Allowance Eligibility

634. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if persons (details supplied) are entitled to the fuel allowance scheme. [49886/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Fuel allowance is a means tested payment to assist householders on long-term social welfare payments to provide for their heating needs. The payment is not intended to meet those costs in full. Only one allowance is paid per household.

In order to be eligible for fuel allowance, a person must be in receipt of a qualifying payment, satisfy a household means test and live alone or only with certain other qualified people.

The person concerned applied for fuel allowance on 28 October 2014. In addition to their state pension (contributory) payment, the applicant was also in receipt of an occupational pension. Their application was disallowed as their means exceeded the allowable limit at that time. The person was notified of this decision in writing on 14 November 2014. According to the records of my Department, the person concerned has not re-applied for fuel allowance.

In order to satisfy the fuel allowance means test an applicant and their spouse can have a combined weekly household income of up to €100.00 above the maximum rate of state pension (contributory) plus increase for qualified adult. Based on current payment rates this limit is €551.80 per week.

If the circumstances of the person have changed and the person considers that they now satisfy the means test, it is open to them to re-apply for fuel allowance. On receipt of their application, their eligibility will be examined and they will be notified of the outcome without delay.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

JobPath Programme

635. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if it is compulsory to return to JobPath in the case of a person (details supplied) in view of the fact that they completed a year on JobPath in August 2017. [49901/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): All Jobseekers on the live register must be capable of; available for and actively seeking full time employment, they are also required to engage with the Department's activation services. The Social Welfare (Consolidated) Act 2005, as amended, specifies that participation in activation meetings is mandatory.

Clients for JobPath are chosen by means of a random selection process and protocols for selection currently preclude the selection of anyone who has already completed 52 weeks on the JobPath programme within the previous four months. The person concerned completed their JobPath referral in August 2017 and is not currently eligible for selection for a second period of activation support with the JobPath service.

All jobseekers that have completed their 52 week engagement with JobPath, without finding suitable and sustainable employment, are being referred back to their Intreo centres for an assessment by a Departmental case officer.

In this case, an assessment was completed by an Intreo Case Officer shortly after he finished with the JobPath service. The options available and offered to him included referrals to the Local Employment Service; the local Partnership for assistance and advice regarding setting

up his own business and work placements with CE and Tús. However, he did not wish pursue those options at that time. However, he will be considered for other activation supports on an ongoing basis including JobPath when he becomes eligible.

I trust this clarifies matters for the Deputy.

Appointments to State Boards Data

636. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of vacancies in each State board under the aegis of her Department, in tabular form. [49935/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The statutory bodies operating under the aegis of my Department are the Citizens Information Board, the Low Pay Commission, the Pensions Authority, the Pensions Council, the Pensions Ombudsman (which does not have a board) and the Social Welfare Tribunal.

There are no vacancies on the boards of any of these statutory bodies at present.

Disability Allowance Payments

637. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if she will address a matter regarding deductions from a social protection payment for a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [49988/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): Disability allowance (DA) is a means-tested payment for people with a specified disability whose income falls below certain limits and who are aged between 16 and are under 66. Income from employment is assessable for means purposes for DA.

Following notification from this gentleman of new employment his rate of DA payment was reduced accordingly due to earnings from this employment.

This gentleman has since contacted us to state that he did not take up employment and his payment has been re-instated to full amount from 23 August 2017. Full arrears have issued to this gentleman.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Community Employment Schemes Administration

638. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the procedures by which organisations, companies and projects which take on persons on the community employment scheme can advertise a position; the restrictions that exist on such advertisement; and her views on whether this has restricted the ability of such schemes to take on such employees. [49970/17]

639. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the procedures by which persons seeking employment on a community employment scheme can apply for such positions; if it is possible to apply without use of the Internet; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [49971/17]

640. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection her views on recent changes to the recruitment and applications procedures for the community employment schemes that have made it more difficult for persons with literacy challenges and limited computer skills to apply to and access community employment schemes; her further views on the fact that giving opportunities to persons who have such skill and literacy challenges is one of the primary objectives of the community employment scheme. [49972/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I propose to take Questions Nos. 638 to 640, inclusive, together.

The aim of the Community Employment (CE) programme is to enhance the employability of disadvantaged and unemployed people by providing work experience and training opportunities for them within their communities. The programme helps break the cycle of unemployment and improve a person's chances of returning to the labour market.

CE sponsors advertise their vacancies free-of-charge on my Department's JobsIreland website - www.jobsireland.ie. Posting vacancies is a relatively simple process and a dedicated video tutorial is available on the site to assist sponsors. Anyone requiring further assistance can contact my Department's National Contact Centre by phone at Lo Call 1890 800 024 or (01) 248 1398, or by email at jobsireland@welfare.ie.

Sponsors can also promote their scheme vacancies within their local communities. At a local level, various methods of promoting CE have been arranged between my Department and local CE schemes, including targeting potentially eligible jobseekers to attend a CE job-fare, where details of CE vacancies and employment opportunities are provided.

There have been no recent changes to the recruitment and applications procedures for CE schemes. Jobseekers receive information about all available employment support options, including CE, through the Intreo Service. Jobseekers receive one-to-one support from a case officer and all available and suitable options are discussed. However, jobseekers can also view CE vacancies online on www.jobsireland.ie. Eligible candidates are then referred to sponsors by case officers in their local Intreo Centres.

CE also supports participants in training and development. Training is based on the personal and occupational needs of each individual and includes providing support to address any literacy difficulties. A tailored Individual Learning Plan (ILP) is agreed between the CE supervisor and the participant. The ILP tracks, records and reports on all planned training interventions and achievements in line with the participant's career plan and employment goals.

I trust that this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Appointments to State Boards Data

641. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the names of persons she has appointed to each State board under the aegis of her Department who have not come from the Public Appointments Service list of suitable candidates, in tabular form. [49997/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The statutory bodies operating under the aegis of my Department are the Citizens Information Board, the Low Pay Commission, The Pensions Authority, The Pensions Council, The Pensions Ombudsman (which does not have a board) and the Social Welfare Tribunal.

A list of the persons whom I have appointed, and who have not come from the Public Appointments Service list of suitable candidates, is detailed in the following table.

Name of statutory body	Name of person(s) appointed
Citizens Information Board	1. Ms. Nicola Walshe – CIB Staff Representative. Re-appointed on 5/11/2017 under Section 9(4)(c) and Section 9(10) of the Comhairle Act 2000. 2. Mr. Tim Duggan - Officer of the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection. Re-appointed on 01/09/2017 under Section 9(4)(a) and Section 9(10) of the Comhairle Act 2000.
Pensions Authority	Mr. Gary Tobin - Representative nominated by the Minister for Finance and appointed on 22/08/2017 under paragraph 2 of the First Schedule to the Pensions Act 1990, (No. 25 of 1990) as amended by the Social Welfare and Pensions (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2013.

JobPath Programme

642. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the amount an organisation (details supplied) receives for each job seeker who is placed with the agency. [50010/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Job-Path is a payment by results model and all set-up and day-to-day operational costs are borne by the companies. The companies are paid on the basis of performance and with the exception of the initial registration fee; payments are made only when a client has achieved sustained employment. The registration fee may be claimed once a jobseeker has developed a Personal Progression Plan (PPP). Job Sustainment Fees (JSF) are payable for each 13 week period of sustained employment, up to a maximum of 52 weeks (i.e. 4 payments).

The overall cost of JobPath will be determined by the number of people who participate in the programme and the number who get sustainable jobs.

It is not intended to publish the individual payments to the JobPath companies as these are commercially sensitive and to do so would place the State at a disadvantage both in terms of the contracts currently in place and in any future procurement that may be undertaken.

The total amount paid in fees from the outset of the service in July 2015 up to the end of September 2017 is €71.2m.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Pension Provisions

643. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the information in her possession in terms of the Pensions Authority investigation of a company's (details supplied) second supplementary fund wind up; when it is likely to be completed; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50020/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Scheme trustees have duties and responsibilities under trust law, under other relevant legislation and under the Pensions Act, 1990, as amended. The duties of pension scheme trustees

include administering the trust in accordance with the law and the terms of the trust deed and rules. Consequently any decisions made by corporate or individual trustees of an occupational pension scheme are governed by the relevant legislation. The provisions of the Pensions Act are enforced through the supervision of the Pensions Authority.

I have previously confirmed to the Deputy that the matter relating to this particular scheme has been raised by my Department with the Pensions Authority. The Pensions Authority is examining the matter to assess if there has been a breach of obligations and take any necessary action.

Although the Pensions Authority is under the aegis of my Department, it regulates pension schemes entirely independently of my Department. Therefore, I am not in a position to comment on the matter, the process or the length of time it will take.

Scheme members or Deputies are welcome to address queries about the investigation into this scheme directly to the Pensions Authority.

I hope that this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Social Welfare Benefits Eligibility

644. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the welfare payment in place for a person (details supplied); the steps that can be taken to ensure the availability of at least a basic payment with a view to the alleviation of hardship; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50023/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The person concerned should make a formal application for a SWA Payment at their Local Community Welfare Clinic at Enfield Health Centre, Johnstownbridge Road, Enfield, County Meath. Clinic days are Wednesday, between 10.00am and 12.00noon. Otherwise the Person concerned may contact a Community Welfare Officer immediately at this number 046 9542146.

I trust that this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Personal Public Service Numbers

645. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the reason it is necessary for widows to obtain new PPS numbers on the passing of their husbands; if her attention has been drawn to the fact that there can be delays in the issuing of these new numbers; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50027/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): In this context it is useful to provide the background to the origin of PPS numbers with a ‘W’ suffix – often referred to as “Level W” numbers.

Under old tax law, the husband of a married couple was considered the assessable spouse and the wife was considered a dependant of the husband. Accordingly, the Office of the Revenue Commissioners (Revenue) allocated the husband’s Revenue and Social Insurance (RSI) number to the wife and appended a “W” to the end so that they could be separately identified but linked for joint assessment. Following the introduction of PRSI in 1979 Revenue collected social insurance on behalf of this Department and made the necessary transfers using this “Level W” number where required.

Following legislative provision being made in the Finance Act 1993 for either spouse to be the assessable spouse, the practice of allocating “Level W” numbers ceased and from then on, all persons were allocated individual, unique numbers. However, it was decided not to ask all individuals with “Level W” numbers to change them until there was an actual need to do so.

The Personal Public Service Number (PPS Number) was introduced in the Social Welfare Act 1998, replacing the RSI Number, and my Department was given legislative responsibility for allocating and managing these new numbers. In practice the RSI numbers in existence were retained and became PPS Numbers, including “Level W” numbers.

As a result of the changes over 20 years ago, the vast majority of individuals now have their own non “Level W” PPS Numbers.

While there is no legal requirement for a widow to obtain a new PPS Number on the death of her husband, the Revenue position is that while it continues to support “Level W” numbers for the limited range of non-assessable spouse options, its systems now require a non “Level W” number where they are dealing with an individual in his or her own right. Revenue has also stated that accommodating “Level W” numbers for tax purposes would require significant ICT development across a range of Revenue systems. Accordingly, Revenue asks people with “Level W” numbers to change them once they need to engage with them on taxation matters.

In addition, as a husband’s PPS Number may be extracted from his wife’s “Level W” number, there are also Data Protection concerns over the continuing use of such numbers.

The process of replacing a “Level W” number is relatively straightforward. The process can only be undertaken by staff of the Client Identity Section (CIS) in my Department who can be contacted by phone or by email. Accordingly, there is no need for the client to turn up at any office or to queue for service. As part of the process, CIS verifies the identity of the individual, secures their consent, purges the existing number and replaces it with either a new number or one that the individual may have had prior to marriage. In addition, all pre-existing records relating to that individual are transferred over to the new number. Once completed, a letter advising of the new number is issued to the individual at their home address. While every effort is made to complete this work within 24 hours, it can occasionally take up to 5 working days because of volumes. However, urgent cases are always expedited.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Ministerial Communications

646. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if she has used a private email account to send or receive official documents or positions on Brexit; and if so, the details of this correspondence. [50058/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection has never used a private email account to send or receive official documents or positions on Brexit.

Social Welfare Payments Administration

647. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection her plans to extend the Christmas bonus to those in receipt of illness benefit; the estimated cost of same; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50076/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I was pleased to announce on Budget Day that an 85% Christmas bonus will be paid this year to over 1.2 million long-term social welfare recipients, such as pensioners, people with disabilities, carers, lone parents and long-term jobseekers at a cost of €219 million.

The Christmas bonus is payable to persons who are in receipt of long term social welfare payments. Illness Benefit is primarily a short term scheme and, as such, has never been a qualifying payment for the purpose of the Christmas bonus.

While the short-term Illness Benefit scheme is not eligible for the bonus, long-term illness/disability payments are eligible. In this regard, persons who are permanently incapable of work may be eligible for the contributory-based Invalidity Pension (subject to satisfying the relevant medical criteria). Persons who are substantially restricted in undertaking suitable employment arising from a medical condition may be eligible for the means-tested Disability Allowance (subject to the relevant medical criteria). Recipients of both of these payments are eligible for the Christmas Bonus.

The estimated cost of providing an 85% Christmas Bonus to Illness Benefit recipients is €9.11 million. However, there are no plans to change the current arrangements.

Maternity Benefit Administration

648. **Deputy Josepha Madigan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection her plans to extend the recently implemented maternity benefit scheme for mothers of premature babies to include mothers of premature babies born before 1 October 2017. [50106/17]

651. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection her views on extending maternity benefit for mothers of premature babies under the Social Welfare Bill which took effect on the 1 October 2017 (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50179/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I propose to take Questions Nos. 648 and 651 together.

The Department of Justice and Equality have responsibility for maternity leave which is provided for in the 1994 and 2004 Maternity Acts. My Department has responsibility for the associated social welfare payment of maternity benefit which is provided for in the Social Welfare Consolidation Act 2005 (as amended). In 2017 it is estimated that my Department will spend approximately €266 million on maternity benefit, in respect of an average of 22,000 recipients per week.

On 3 October 2017 I, together with my colleague the Minister for Justice and Equality, Charlie Flanagan T.D., announced increased maternity leave and maternity benefit for mothers whose babies are born prematurely.

Under the new arrangements, in addition to the current 26 weeks of paid maternity leave a mother will be entitled to an additional period of maternity leave and benefit where her baby is born prematurely, where she meets the ordinary qualifying criteria for the schemes. The additional period will commence at the end of the standard 26 week period of paid maternity leave. The extended period to be added will be the number of weeks from the baby's actual date of birth up to two weeks before the expected date of confinement which would have been the 37th week of the pregnancy, at which point the current entitlement to 26 weeks leave and

benefit would normally begin.

The Government decided that the additional maternity leave and benefit would be available for mothers of premature babies born on or after 1 October 2017. There are no plans to extend the new arrangements to mothers of premature babies born before that date.

Departmental Bodies Data

649. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the bodies under the aegis her Department to which her Department provides in excess of €1 million funding per annum; the public funding received by these bodies; the bodies in which 50% or more of their income comes from public sources; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50114/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Citizen's Information Board (CIB) is the only body under the aegis of the Department that receives in excess of €1 million funding per annum.

The 2017 REV Estimates provide for a grant of €54.05m to the CIB. The CIB is responsible for supporting the provision of information, advice (including money advice and budgeting) and advocacy on a wide range of public and social services. The CIB delivers on this remit through direct provision, by supporting a network of delivery partners, and by funding targeted projects. CIB requires annual service agreements with its network of service delivery partners.

Disability Allowance Payments

650. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when the additional child dependency rate will be applied to a claim for a disability allowance in respect of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50167/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): This gentleman has been in receipt of disability allowance (DA) with effect from 31 October 2012.

On 28 September 2017, we received a request from this gentleman to have an increase for a fourth child included in his DA payment. This has been awarded from 26 July 2017 and arrears of payment due have issued by his chosen payment method.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Question No. 651 answered with Question No. 648.

Job Initiatives

652. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection her plans to address concerns that long ETB training courses limit the earning potential of the long-term unemployed; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50262/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): A range of short-term and long-term, part-time and full-time ETB courses are available to long-

term unemployed jobseekers, including some which the Departments supports through the Back To Education Allowance Scheme. Access to these courses is typically through a Case Officer or a JobPath Case Worker or LES Mediator. Courses may be agreed in the context of an agreed Personal Progression Plan, but at all times are chosen to best support the jobseeker secure full-time, suitable and sustainable employment. Of necessity, some of the courses agreed are long-term. If the person's circumstances change while participating in the course, they should contact their Case Officer/Case Worker/Mediator to discuss suitable options. A jobseeker would not and could not be prevented from leaving a course to take up an offer of suitable employment.

Exceptional Needs Payment Data

653. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of requests for exceptional needs payments in each of the years 2012 to 2016 and to date in 2017; the number of exceptional needs payments granted; the number refused, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50269/17]

654. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of successful appeals relating to exceptional needs payments in each of the years 2012 to 2016 and to date in 2017, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50270/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I propose to take Questions Nos. 653 and 654 together.

Under the supplementary welfare allowance (SWA) scheme, the Department may make a single exceptional needs payment (ENP) to help meet essential, once-off and unforeseen expenditure which a person could not reasonably be expected to meet out of their weekly income. The Government has provided €31.5 million for exceptional and urgent needs payments in 2017.

There is no automatic entitlement to a payment. The ENP scheme is demand led and payments are made at the discretion of the officers administering the scheme taking into account the requirements of the legislation and all the relevant circumstances of the case in order to ensure that the payments target those most in need of assistance.

Statistics are maintained relating to payments under the ENP scheme, however they are not maintained on the number of applications, the outcome of those applications, or the number of requests for reviews of ENP decisions or the outcomes of those reviews. Details of the number of payments under the ENP and UNP schemes for 2012 to 2017 are set out in the following tabular statement.

Any persons who consider that they have an entitlement to an ENP should contact my Department.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputies.

Number of Exceptional Needs Payments made by year:

Year	Number of Payments
2012	197,000
2013	133,000

Year	Number of Payments
2014	107,000
2015	102,000
2016	100,000
2017 (October)	84,800

JobPath Implementation

655. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of complaints received against the two companies tasked with delivering JobPath since it commenced; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50271/17]

656. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of persons referred to JobPath since its commencement; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50272/17]

657. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the actions her Department has taken when a complaint has been received in relation to JobPath; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50273/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I propose to take Questions Nos. 655 to 657, inclusive, together.

As the Deputy will be aware, JobPath is a service that supports people who are long-term unemployed and those most at risk of becoming long-term unemployed to secure and sustain paid employment.

The service commenced operations in mid-2015, and reached full State-wide delivery of the service in July 2016.

129,000 Jobseekers have engaged with the service to the end of Oct. ‘17, with 421 complaints received in total. 305 of these were related to Customer Service, 61 involved policy issues, 40 related to client not wishing to engage, 8 Data Protection queries and 7 related to Legislation.

As of 10th November, 55 complaints are currently in the process of being investigated.

My Department logs and records all complaints received in respect of the JobPath service. Strict timeframes apply to the issuing of acknowledgements and responses and these are constantly monitored to ensure adherence.

The contract requires the JobPath provider to respond to all complaints in the first instance. To this end each provider has a comprehensive Complaints Procedure which contains successive levels of escalation, which can be availed of should the client feel the matter has not been adequately addressed. This ensures that complaints are dealt with as comprehensively as possible and at the appropriate level of authority. In the event that a customer has availed of this procedure but remains dissatisfied with the response to their complaint, they may request my Department to carry out a full review of the file and a response and / or recommendations will be issued. Customers may also refer a complaint to the Office of the Ombudsman for review once they have exhausted the complaints process but remain dissatisfied.

In the JobPath context, a complaint is defined as “an expression of dissatisfaction, measurable by reference to service standards, and requiring a response.” Issues covered by the

complaint process may include delays, mistakes and poor customer service and also complaints made under Sections 25, 26, 27 and 28 of the Disability Act, 2005.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Fuel Allowance Applications

658. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of a fuel allowance application by a person (details supplied) in Dublin 9. [50292/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Fuel allowance is a means tested payment to assist householders on long-term social welfare payments to provide for their heating needs. The payment is not intended to meet those costs in full. Only one allowance is paid per household.

In order to be eligible for fuel allowance, a person must be in receipt of a qualifying payment, satisfy a household means test and live alone or only with certain other qualified people.

An application for fuel allowance has been received from the person concerned. A request for information was sent to the person concerned on 23 November 2017 to clarify details of their means and household composition. As soon as a reply is received, a decision will be made on the person's eligibility for fuel allowance and the person concerned will be notified of that decision without delay.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Allowance Payments

659. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection her plans to review the situation regarding carer's allowance whereby a person who is providing full time care for two persons can only be awarded 1.5 of an allowance (details supplied). [50301/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): My Department provides a range of income supports for carers including carer's benefit, carer's allowance, domiciliary care allowance and the carer's support grant. Carers are entitled to an extra half-rate carer's allowance if they care for more than one person and a respite care grant for each care recipient.

The maximum rate of carer's allowance payable to a carer who provides full-time care and attention to one person is €209 weekly. If a carer is caring for a second person and is assessed with no means, they could qualify for a 150 per cent carer's allowance which is payable at the weekly rate of €313.50.

The financial supports available to carers in Ireland are among the highest rates of income support in Europe. Furthermore, the means test for carer's allowance is one of the least onerous in the range of social protection payments provided by my Department. Moreover, carers can continue to receive carer's allowance at half the weekly rate if they are in receipt of another weekly social welfare payment. They are also entitled to free travel and if residing with the care recipient may also receive the household benefits package.

Considerable improvements have been introduced for carers in recent years. In Budget 2016, the carer's support grant, which is payable without a means test, was increased to €1,700. In addition to this, the period when carer's allowance can be paid following the death of a care recipient was extended from 6 to 12 weeks. Budget 2017 also introduced a measure that extends payment of carer's allowance for 12 weeks where the care recipient enters permanent residential care. Most recently, Budget 2018 provides for a €5 increase in the weekly carer's allowance rate. This follows on from a €5 per week increase in Budget 2017 and a €3 per week increase in Budget 2016. From the beginning of the week commencing 26 March 2018, the maximum payment rate for carer's allowance will be €214 per week.

I can assure the Deputy that I am very aware of the key role carers play in society and I will continue to keep the range of supports available to carers under review. However, any improvements or additions to these supports can only be considered in a budgetary context and in the light of available financial resources.

I hope this clarifies the issue for the Deputy.

Citizen Information Services Provision

660. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the timeframe for the closure of a centre (details supplied). [50319/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Citizens Information Board (CIB) under the aegis of my Department is responsible for supporting the provision of information, advice (including money advice and budgeting) and advocacy on a wide range of public and social services. The Citizens Information Board delivers on this remit through direct provision, by supporting a network of delivery partners, and by funding targeted projects.

North Kildare Citizens Information Services (CIS) which is set to receive funding of €216,000 from the Citizens Information Board in 2017, delivers its services from a dedicated Citizens Information Centre in Maynooth and provides weekly outreach services at Leixlip and Johnstownbridge. A weekly outreach service was also provided in Celbridge Library up to April of this year, when due to accommodation difficulties, the service was suspended.

North Kildare CIS is actively seeking an alternative premises in order to reinstate the service in the town. In the meantime, people can contact the main CIS office in Maynooth or attend at one of the outreach services

Details of location, opening times and phoned numbers are available in the attached link - <http://centres.citizensinformation.ie/centre.php?cic=maynooth+cic>.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

State Pension (Contributory) Eligibility

661. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the way in which the total contributions approach to the calculation of the State pension, contributory, from 2020 will be carried out; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50330/17]

678. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Pro-

tection the status of the commitment to remove the anomalies in the method of calculation of entitlements to the State contributory pension; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50660/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I propose to take Questions Nos. 661 and 678 together.

The National Pensions Framework proposed that a total contribution approach should replace the yearly average approach. Under this approach, the rate of pension paid would more closely reflect the total number of Social Insurance contributions made by a person throughout her or his working life and the anomalies of the Yearly Averaging method of calculating entitlement would be removed. It is expected that this approach to pension qualification will replace the current one from around 2020.

A proposal for the precise method of how the Total Contributions Approach will be implemented is currently being finalised by officials in my Department, having recently received the Actuarial Review of the Social Insurance Fund 2015. When this has been finalised, I intend to consult with relevant stakeholders before a decision is made on the final proposal by Government. That proposal will then be subject to the legislative process which may result in further changes.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputies.

JobPath Implementation

662. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if the cost benefit analysis regarding the outsourcing of the JobPath programme will be published; if she has given consideration to keeping the scheme in-house rather than outsourcing it to a private company; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50350/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): As the Deputy will be aware, the State's Public Employment Service is managed by my Department and delivered directly by its own Intreo service as well as by contracted private companies, such as JobPath, Local Employment Service (LES) and Job Club providers.

My Department has for many years contracted with third parties for the delivery of a range of services/programmes/schemes. Contracts are in place with some 60 companies for the delivery of the JobPath, LES and Job Club services, and while these service elements are provided by third parties, jobseekers engaged with these services remain customers of the Department.

It is important to note that these services have been designed to augment and complement one another, not replace the service capacity available through the Departments Intreo offices.

For example, the capacity introduced by the JobPath service, aligned with the welcome reduction in the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate (from a peak of 15.2% in January 2012 to 6.0% in October 2017) has enabled the Department to reduce the caseload of LES mediators and thereby enhance the service being delivered by LES providers for jobseekers in general and for the long-term unemployed in particular (LES staff caseloads have been reduced, in line with international norms, to a maximum of 1:120).

An in-depth evaluation of the JobPath strand of the Department's activation service has commenced data gathering. Completion of the evaluation is provisionally scheduled for the end of Quarter 3, 2018.

JobPath contracts are for a six year period and comprise two distinct phases: phase one entails four years of client referrals while phase two entails a two year ‘run off’ period during which time no additional clients will be referred.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

State Pension (Contributory) Eligibility

663. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if carers who are signing on for credits and who pay voluntary contributions will be guaranteed a full contributory pension when they reach retirement age; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50391/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The State pension contributory is a very valuable benefit and is the bedrock of the Irish pension system. Therefore, it is important to ensure that those qualifying 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, 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.

One of the conditions of the State pension contributory is that a person needs a minimum of 520 weekly contributions (i.e. 10 years) paid since entering insurable employment, i.e. between their 16th and 66th birthdays. If a person does not have this minimum number of contributions paid, they will not generally have an entitlement to this particular pension, either at a full or reduced rate.

Since 1961, when contributory pensions were introduced, the average contributions test has been used in calculating the rate of pension entitlement. Entitlement is banded, with the maximum rate payable to those with a yearly average of 48-52 contributions, and the minimum rate payable to those with a yearly average in the range of 10-14 contributions per year. Even if someone has only 10 years (520 weeks) of paid reckonable contributions between their 16th and 66th birthdays, they would generally qualify for a State pension (contributory), although the rate payable would vary depending on their circumstances.

Voluntary Contributions are designed to facilitate employees / self-employed persons who are no longer subject to compulsory PRSI, to pay contributions directly to the Department on a voluntary basis, in order to protect their future State Pension Contributory (SPC), Widow(er)'s Contributory Pension and Guardian's Contributory Payment entitlements.

There are a number of qualifying conditions attached to the Voluntary Contribution Scheme. In order to become a Voluntary Contributor a person must (i) have a minimum of 260 to 520 Contributions paid – dependant on the period he or she wishes to pay for, and (ii) apply within 60 months of the end of the year in which he or she last paid or was credited a contribution.

My Department will take into account all relevant contributions, paid or credited, as well as the time frame involved, when making a decision on an individual's level of entitlement to the State Pension (contributory).

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Departmental Contracts Data

664. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the public contracts between her Department and companies, details supplied, in each of the years 2011 to 2016; the value of each contract; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50400/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The public contracts awarded to the companies concerned, in each of the years 2011 to 2016, and the value of each contract, is outlined in the table in Appendix 1.

A breakdown of annual expenditure on consultancy and IT external service provision, and a list of purchase orders for €20,000 or greater, is published routinely on the Department website at <http://www.welfare.ie/en/Pages/Procurement-Policy.aspx>. Under the FOI publication scheme and with effect from January 2016, the Department also publishes details of public contracts awarded (over €25k) at <http://www.welfare.ie/en/Pages/Procurement-Contracts-Awarded.aspx>.

Appendix 1

Company	Year	Contract	Value (incl. VAT)
Deloitte & Touche	2011	IS Audit Services	€170,478
Deloitte & Touche	2012	Security Partner	€83,025
Deloitte & Touche	2013	ICT Resources to work in the Department's Regional Service Development and BOM Modelling Development Teams (Lot 1)	€1,564,560
Deloitte & Touche	2013	ICT Resources to work in the Department's Regional Service Development and BOM Modelling Development Teams (Lot 2)	€826,560
Deloitte & Touche	2015	Provision of ICT Resources to work in the Department's Business Intelligence Development & Architecture Teams (Lot 1)	€228,780
Deloitte & Touche	2015	Provision of ICT Resources to work in the Department's Business Intelligence Development & Architecture Teams (Lot 2)	€82,564
Deloitte & Touche	2015	ICT Resources to work in the Department's INTREO (Regional Service Delivery & Activation Case Management) development teams	€3,000,000
Deloitte & Touche	2016	External Development Services for the Development of a School Meals Scheme Processing System	€395,193
Deloitte & Touche	2016	Provision of ICT Resources to work in the Departments BOM Modelling Development Team	€1,214,748
Deloitte & Touche	2016	Provision of ICT Resources to work in the Department's Digital Platform Development Team	€2,091,000

Company	Year	Contract	Value (incl. VAT)
Deloitte & Touche	2016	Extend and Re-Use BOMi functionality for PRSI Refunds Incorporating an On-Line Service	€645,750
Ernst & Young	2012	Security Partner to provide ongoing Information Security Support	€7,623
KPMG	2012	Actuarial Review of the Social Insurance Fund	€153,750

Education and Training Boards

665. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection her views on the link between social welfare and ETB courses encouraging course participants to turn down employment in view of the fact that they would lose a place on an ETB course; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50425/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Department's activation service is tailored to the individual needs and circumstances of the jobseeker, with the aim of him/her progressing to suitable, sustainable full-time employment. In the context of the agreed Personal Progression Plan, a need may be identified for the jobseeker to pursue a course of education, training or development, in which case the Case Officer will nominate the person for that course. If the person's circumstances change while participating in the course, they should contact their Case Officer to discuss suitable options. Participation in a course would generally not be viewed as a sufficient reason not to take up a suitable, sustainable job.

State Pension (Contributory) Eligibility

666. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection her plans to alter the State pension qualification criteria to ensure that all persons that have had periods outside of the PAYE system or who have been a home maker for a period of time are entitled to a full State pension; her views on whether the situation whereby many persons have lost their entitlement to a full pension due to changes made in 2012 is unacceptable; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50444/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The changes made to State Pension (contributory) rate bands made in budget 2012, affected those pensioners who had a yearly average of less than 39 social insurance contributions over the course of their working life. As such, the changes did not preclude any pensioner who would have qualified for a full State Pension (contributory) pre-2012 from qualifying for a full rate after September 2012.

The current rate bands were introduced from September 2012, replacing previous rates introduced in 2000. The rate bands prior to 2000 were less generous, and the improved rate bands introduced in 2000 were a feature of the economic and political environment at that time. The economic crash changed the focus and while other payments were reduced as a result, the core rates of the pension, which many pensioners were solely dependent on, were maintained. Instead, the rates for people who both had additional means and lesser PRSI contribution records were reduced.

The 2012 rate bands more closely reflect the social insurance contributions history of a per-

son than those in place between 2000 and 2012. The current rate bands still provide pensions to people which are better than proportionate with their level of contribution. A person with only 20 years of contributions over nearly 50 years will still get an 85% pension, which compares favourably with contributory pensions in other EEU countries.

It is estimated that to revert to the previous bands from January 2018 would result in an annual cost of well over €70 million in 2018, and this annual cost would increase by an estimated €10 to €12 million extra each following year. Awarding a maximum rate contributory pension to everyone who had spent time outside the PAYE system, regardless of their means, would be even more expensive and it is estimated this would cost well over €1 billion per annum.

My Department is examining in depth various options that would provide some relief to those who would have a higher contributory pension, had the rate-bands not been amended in 2012. If there are equitable changes that target such relief to those who were affected by the yearly average system, particularly those who had homemaking periods prior to the introduction of the Homemakers scheme, I will ask Government to consider if and how these might be financed.

It is intended to introduce a total contributions approach for new pensioners from 2020. This will make the rate of contributory pension more closely match contributions made by a person. It will also have significant homemakers provisions that will assist those pensioners who spent significant periods caring for their children, or adults with a caring need.

The main aim of Government policy on pensions is to make sure that pensions are affordable, sustainable and keep their value in the coming years. The reforms that are planned will result in a more inclusive and fairer pension system for all citizens.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Disability Allowance Applications

667. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when a disability allowance payment will issue to a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50516/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): Following an appeal to the independent Social Welfare Appeals Office, an Appeals Officer has decided that the person concerned is entitled to disability allowance with effect from 14 December 2016. The first payment will be made to her on 6 December 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).

Data Protection

668. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection her views on whether her Department should not only acknowledge but offer an apology to a person (details supplied) after the Data Commissioner has found that her Department failed in its duty of care to protect information and personal data that it held on the person; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50519/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Department takes customer privacy very seriously, works diligently to protect customer data, and has in place a suite of measures to support data protection and information security awareness and compliance. As custodian of personal information, staff members of the Department are reminded continuously about the importance of information security and to be vigilant and aware of data protection legal obligations. If there is a breach of data, the incident is investigated and corrective measures are put in place, in accordance with data protection legislation.

The incident involving this person was fully investigated, in the course of which a number of communications issued to the person. He received a number of written apologies and a Department official met with the person and again apologised. In addition, the person was registered for a Public Service Card, thus providing identity verification up to Safe Level 2, which reduces the potential for fraudulent use.

Public Services Card Data

669. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the overall cost to date of the public services card, including production, activation and all other associated costs; the life span of the card; the nature of the contract with the service provider; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50526/17]

674. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the costs associated with the introduction of the public services card scheme during 2017, including the staff hours involved and the costs of postage to persons notifying them to obtain a card; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50634/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I propose to take Questions Nos. 669 and 674 together.

My Department (on behalf of the public service) entered into a contract for the production, personalisation, distribution and associated helpdesk support of 3 million PSCs by the end of 2017. The contract was awarded to Biometric Card Services (BCS), an Irish registered company based in Co. Wicklow. It was a condition of award of the contract that all data and related services provision and operation be provided on-site in Ireland and subject to the jurisdiction of the Irish Courts. As a consequence, the cards are produced in Ireland. A number of changes have been made to the contract since its award, primarily to deal with the implementation of new and additional security measures, to facilitate the implementation of new Free Travel software specification, and to allow extension of the contract period to the end of 2017.

To date, some 2.98 million cards have been issued. As the initiative is demand-led, it isn't possible to predict precisely when three million PSCs will be issued. My Department is considering a number of options for continued production of the PSC when the current contract expires at the end of this year.

The following table sets out, as requested, the costs to date, both overall and in 2017, of the Public Services Card project.

Costs	to date	2017 only
Production, personalisation and distribution of PSCs	€20,882,292.41	€3,722,187.09
Helpdesk *	€2,615,546.71	€86,990.24
Staff (estimated)**	€28,789,151.58	€5,573,603.81

Costs	to date	2017 only
Other***	€2,297,150.65	€95,415.12
Total	€54,584,141.35	€9,478,196.26

Notes:

*Helpdesk costs include all calls including those related to activation, lost or stolen cards or general queries. They are charged on the basis of call-time and are not differentiated as between the nature of the call received.

**Currently the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform has sanctioned a total of up to 218 posts for the Project. These posts include both temporary and permanent roles, and the numbers and locations of deployed staff are kept under constant review to ensure the best use of resources. As of end-October 2017 there were 51.96 full-time-equivalent permanent staff (FTE) and 164 Temporary Clerical Officers working on the PSC Project. These figures include four full-time IT staff assigned to the PSC project.

***Other costs include provision of external expertise in relation to related technical issues as well as development and deployment of associated software on internal IT systems.

My Department does not have a figure for the cost of postage of invites to clients for SAFE registration as, for budget purposes, postage costs are not differentiated across different business processes.

Currently, the PSC has a maximum validity period of up to 7 years. At the time the Project was being launched, the durability of similar cards, e.g., bank cards, in use at the time was three to five years. However, card technology was changing and a new, more durable form of card could be utilised. Following discussion and advice from the Project's technical advisors, my Department settled on 7 years as a preliminary validity period for the bulk of initial cards. Obviously, this initial policy is being kept under review and changes to it will be contingent on practical experience affecting the cards' durability in the field.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputies.

Carer's Allowance Applications

670. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when a decision will be made in respect of a carer's allowance application submitted by a person (details supplied) in County Galway; the reason for the delay in making a decision on this application due to the fact that the application has been lodged since June 2017; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50556/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I confirm that my Department received an application for carer's allowance (CA) from the person concerned on 11 July 2017 in respect of two care recipients.

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

As the applicant is engaged in farming, the matter was referred to a local social welfare inspector (SWI) on 11 October 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.

Departmental Communications

671. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if transmissions and or communications between her Department's servers to local office computers are transmitted over HTTP or HTTPS; if transmissions and or communications between her local offices are transmitted over HTTP or HTTPS; the date on which the certificate was applied to allow secure transmissions; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50612/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): My Department is a major user of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and invests on an ongoing basis in securing the ICT technical infrastructure and the services and data used in support of our business. This includes traditional, defence-in-depth deployments of preventative controls like firewalls and endpoint protection and advanced threat detection tools. My Department also employs security technology that, together with a dedicated ICT security team and well defined processes, continually monitors the Department's network and services.

The Department's offices are connected to the Department's central data centres located in secured locations in Dublin through a secure Metropolitan Area Network (MAN) running on dedicated dark fibre and through a Wide Area Network (WAN) using dedicated private network links. Data is maintained centrally in the secure data centres at the centre of the network. Data transmissions are between the offices and the data centres. Our offices are connected to the data centres using privately addressed circuits only. These circuits do not use or access or interconnect with the public internet at any point. Data transmitted across the Department's network uses a variety of transmission and security protocols including HTTPS. There are multiple certificates involved – all with varying start dates and refresh dates.

My Department has well defined policies in relation to the use of the Department's ICT systems and network resources including all electronic communication systems and equipment and will continue to invest in securing all ICT systems and data.

Public Services Card

672. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of persons who have had their social welfare allowances or services withdrawn due to the fact they did not have or refused to apply for a public services card; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50632/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): In 2005, the Government approved a rules-based standard for establishing and authenticating an individual's identity for the purposes of access to public services. This standard is known as the Standard Authentication Framework environment – or SAFE. A person who successfully completes a SAFE 2 registration process (i.e. verifies their identity to a substantial level of assurance) may be issued with a Public Services Card (PSC).

In the case of my Department's own services, the legislation governing identity verification

for existing claimants is set out in the Social Welfare Consolidation Act 2005, as amended, viz.

This legislation requires a person to satisfy the Minister as to their identity and allows disqualification from receipt of a benefit in the event that it is not done. It is not possible for a person to satisfy the Minister as to his or her identity without being SAFE2 registered.

My Department does not collect data on the number of individuals who currently, or who, at any point in time, have had a payment stopped by reason of failing to complete the SAFE 2 registration process. This data is fluid in nature.

For example, a considerable number of customers who have a payment or entitlement suspended or stopped subsequently decide to complete the SAFE2 process and have their payment or entitlement reinstated. It should be noted that of the remainder, a considerable portion do not make any contact with the Department. The decision to stop a payment is never made lightly. However, where a customer does not satisfy the Minister in relation to identity, in accordance with the legislative requirements, a payment can be disqualified. In advance of any such disqualification, the Department makes every effort to engage with the customer to explain the legislative basis for the SAFE2 registration process and the consequences of potential disqualification. Where a payment has been disqualified and the customer subsequently successfully completes the SAFE2 registration process, their payment will be reinstated by my Department (assuming they continue to meet all qualifying criteria for that payment) from the date of compliance.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

JobPath Implementation

673. Deputy Catherine Murphy asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of persons who have been sanctioned for refusing to sign a personal progression plan with companies (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50633/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): As the Deputy will be aware, JobPath is a service that supports people who are long-term unemployed and those most at risk of becoming long-term unemployed to secure and sustain paid employment. The service commenced operations in mid-2015, and reached full State-wide delivery of the service in July 2016.

Jobseekers who are selected for JobPath, are invited to attend an initial information session at which the jobseekers' rights and responsibilities are explained. Participants on JobPath receive intensive individual support to help them address barriers to employment. Each participant is assigned a personal advisor who assesses their skills, experience, challenges and work goals and agrees a "personal progression plan" that includes a schedule of activities, actions and job focused targets. Participants are provided with a range of development supports and may also be referred for further education and training opportunities.

It is important to note that the rules and processes for the application of a reduced rate of payment are the same across all of the Department's activation services, whether they are delivered directly by the Department's own Intreo service or through its contracted services such as the Local Employment Service or JobPath service. Only a departmental official can make a decision to apply a reduced rate of payment. The process with regard to such decisions includes written/verbal warnings from a departmental official and an opportunity for the jobseeker to re-engage with the service prior to the application of a reduced payment rate.

Up to the end of October 2017 approximately 9,000, or 6.9% of the total 129,000 clients who engaged with the JobPath service between July 2015 and October 2017 have had, at some point, a penalty rate applied to their payment: some of these clients may have had the penalty rate applied after finishing their engagement period with the JobPath service, so the actual numbers who have had a penalty rate applied while with the JobPath service will be lower.

Data specifically related to the application of reduced payments for clients refusing to sign a personal progression plan is not available. It is important to note that the factors to be considered in applying a penalty rate precludes me from making a definitive statement that the sole context involved would have been non engagement with JobPath.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Question No. 674 answered with Question No. 669.

Public Services Card

675. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if the obtaining of data through SAFE 2 and the public services card is fully compliant with the general data protection regulation law including ensuring that ownership of the data ultimately rests with the persons rather than her Department; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50635/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which will come into force on the 25th May 2018, replaces the existing data protection framework under the EU Data Protection Directive and imposes a general necessity to have specific legislative provisions underpinning the methods organisations use to process data.

The main legal powers providing for and relating to SAFE registration and the PSC are set out in the Social Welfare Consolidation Act, 2005 (as amended) as follows –

- Sections 262 and 263B provide for the verification of identity to facilitate the issuing and use of a Personal Public Services Number (PPS Number or PPSN)

- Sections 263, 263A and 263B provide for the verification of identity to facilitate the issuing, use and cancellation of a PSC;

- Section 241 provides that a person must satisfy the Minister to his/her identity when making a new claim and sets out how that can be done; and

- Section 247C provides that an existing claimant must satisfy the Minister to his/her identity, sets out how that can be done, and provides for disqualification where an existing claimant fails to so do.

The recently published “Comprehensive Guide to SAFE Registration and the Public Services Card” is available on my Department’s website http://www.welfare.ie/en/Pages/Public-Services-Card_holder.aspx under “Downloads”. This document contains 54 detailed questions and answers which address a wide range of questions about SAFE Registration and the PSC. Appendix 1 of this document lists legislative provisions associated with the Public Services Card.

My Department collects and holds large volumes of personal data on customers and is very aware of the need to have adequate data protection policies, procedures and structures in place

in line with the GDPR. Preparations for the GDPR are being overseen by the Department's Data Management Programme Board which comprises many of the Department's most senior personnel. The Department has a dedicated GDPR implementation team in place and has commissioned external expertise to assist it with achieving GDPR compliance.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Public Services Card

676. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if she issued a communication to An Post requesting that presentation of public services cards be made mandatory for receipt of any social protection payment; the date on which this communication was issued; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50636/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection operates its contract for cash payment services with An Post. The Department and An Post agreed a protocol in 2014 governing the forms of identification which claimants, or their agents, must produce in order to collect payments. There has been no change in this agreed protocol or in the forms of identification required of claimants to collect their social welfare payments.

Social welfare claimants must present one of the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection payment cards when collecting payments. These cards are; the Public Services Card, the Social Services Card and the Temporary Payment Card.

The Public Services Card, or PSC, is an identity token, issued by the Department, following a face to face registration process which involves the capture of an individual's photograph and signature plus the verification of identity data already held by the Department. No other identification is required of clients when a PSC is presented.

The Social Services Card, or SSC, is a payment token, used to collect DSP payments. The token is issued to claimants who have not yet been registered for and received a PSC. If presenting for payment with an SSC, a person must also provide additional identification. Ideally this should be photographic. Acceptable forms of photographic ID are:

- Current Passport (For Irish and UK passport holders, a passport which has expired within the previous 12 months is acceptable)
- Current (in date) National ID card for EU citizens other than Ireland or UK
- Current (in date) Irish or UK Drivers Licence or Irish Driver Learner Permit
- Current (in date) Garda National Immigration Bureau (GNIB) Card
- Emergency Photo ID produced by the Department.

If a claimant holds an SSC but does not have appropriate photographic ID then the following documents are acceptable:

- Medical Card and Proof of Address
- Bank Card and Proof of Address
- Recent work ID and Proof of Address

- Recent communication from Public Service body or Local Authority and Proof of Address.

If a customer holds an SSC but is unable to present either acceptable Photo ID or alternative ID, An Post may make payment based on the personal validation of the Post Office staff on the basis that the customer is known to them by sight and name.

Finally the Temporary Payment Card is a paper document issued by the Department for short-term use by a claimant pending receipt of a PSC or SSC. A temporary payment card is valid for a specific period. An Post may not accept the Temporary Payment Card without the additional forms of identification listed above for the SSC.

In addition to the identity requirements for claimants collecting in person, post offices are obliged to apply the following controls in respect of payments collected by authorised agents. These agents are of two types; temporary and permanent.

Payment should only be made to a temporary agent on presentation of the following:

- A Temporary Agent form (TA1) signed by the claimant authorising the agent to collect their payments.
- The claimant's PSC, SSC or Temporary Card
- The Agent's own photo ID. Acceptable forms of photo ID are the same as set out for SSC card.

An Post have recently begun the roll out of an updated counter transaction system. This change would appear to have caused some confusion among staff in post offices as my Department has received an increase in public queries regarding the use of the PSC for identification. In each case the Department has asked An Post to contact the relevant post office to clarify that there has been no change in the agreed protocol governing the forms of identification which claimants, or their agents, must produce in order to collect payments. To date these communications have been successful in ensuring that these instances have been resolved.

State Pension (Non-Contributory) Appeals

677. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an appeal by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50652/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and 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 21st September 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 Employment Affairs and Social Protection. These papers were received in the Social Welfare Appeals Office on 07th November 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.

Question No. 678 answered with Question No. 661.

Foireann Roinne

679. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Gnóthaí Fostaíochta agus Coimirce Sóisialaí cén líon iomlán foirne atá fostaithe ina Roinn faoi láthair; cé mhéid post atá daingnithe nó aitheanta ag an Roinn (i scéim teanga, nó ar aon bhealach eile) mar phoist a bhfuil riachtanas Gaeilge ag baint leo; cé mhéid duine atá ann ag a bhfuil líofacht i nGaeilge agus atá ag feidhmiú sna poist sin atá daingnithe nó aitheanta mar phoist a bhfuil riachtanas Gaeilge ag baint leo; an bhfuil sí beartaithe ag an tráth seo aon phost eile de chuid na Roinne a aithint mar phoist a bhfuil riachtanas Gaeilge. [50681/17]

680. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Gnóthaí Fostaíochta agus Coimirce Sóisialaí cé mhéid folúntas a líonadh ina Roinn ó thús na bliana seo; cé mhéid de na folúntais sin a bhain le poist a bhí sainaitheanta mar phoist a raibh Gaeilge riachtanach ina leith; cé mhéid folúntas atá le líonadh faoi láthair agus cé mhéid de na folúntais siúd atá sainaitheanta mar fholúntais a bhfuil riachtanas Gaeilge ag baint leo. [50698/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I propose to take Questions Nos. 679 and 680 together.

Tá mo Roinn tiomanta do sheirbhís do chustaiméirí ar ardchaighdeán a sholáthar i nGaeilge agus i mBéarla. Tá Scéim Teanga 2015 - 2018 na Roinne i bhfeidhm ón 16 Márta 2015 agus beidh feidhm léi ar feadh tréimhse trí bliana nó go dtí go ndeimhneoidh an tAire Cultúir, Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta Scéim nua. Tá an Scéim sin, ina leagtar síos tiomantais na Roinne do sheirbhís do chustaiméirí i nGaeilge agus a thugann eolas faoi na seirbhísí atá ar fáil trí Ghaeilge, foilsithe ar shuíomh gréasáin mo Roinne www.welfare.ie.

Táim sásta go bhfuil dóthain foirne againn in áiteanna i láthair na huair chun freagra a thabhairt ar iarratais chun seirbhísí na Roinne a sheachadadh trí Ghaeilge. I gcás ina dtagann folúntas chun cinn in áit ina bhfuil gá le feidhm dháttheangach, féachann mo Roinn leis an bhfolúntas sin a líonadh ó phainéil arna mbunú ag an tSeirbhís um Cheapacháin Phoiblí.

Tá cuntas sa tábla thíos ar an bhfaisnéis atá á lorg ag an Teachta Dála:

An Roinn Gnóthaí Fostaíochta agus Coimirce Sóisialaí	Iomlán
Foireann reatha	6382
Poist a líonadh in 2017	444
Poist a líonadh in 2017 áit ar aithníodh líofacht sa Ghaeilge mar riachtanas	2
Folúntais le líonadh faoi láthair	176
Folúntais atá le líonadh faoi láthair áit ar aithníodh líofacht sa Ghaeilge mar riachtanas	1

Mortgage Lending

681. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the amount that was loaned in mortgages for newly built homes over the past 25 to 30 years. [50237/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):

Certain data on loan approvals and payments in respect of new homes for the years 1970 to 2006 and 2007 to 2016 are available on my Department's website. Due to a change in data sources for lending institution information, loan payments data up to and including 2006 are not directly comparable to the information from 2007 onwards. The data from 2007 onwards relates to loan payments by the Banking Payments Federation of Ireland and local authorities. Data prior to 2006 was sourced directly from lending agencies and local authorities and included an unquantifiable element of mortgage re-financing.

This data can be found at the following weblink under the loan payments heading:

www.housing.gov.ie/housing/statistics/house-prices-loans-and-profile-borrowers/mortgage-market-statistics.

Wind Energy Guidelines

682. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government when the regulations that pertain to industrial style wind farm developments will be implemented; if these regulations will take account of the concerns regarding flicker, separation distance, height of turbines being proposed and the effect on rural landscapes including the impact upon the local heritage; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50308/17]

705. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the evidence base and reasoning that has been used to arrive at a setback distance figure of four times the tip height from residential property with respect to visual amenity as set out at key aspect 2 in the preferred draft approach of the targeted review of the wind energy development guidelines 2006 published by his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50240/17]

706. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the legislative basis and specific statutory provisions under which circular letters PI20 2013 and PI05 2017 are issued; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50241/17]

707. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if circular letters PI20 2013 and PI05 2017 are advisory in nature; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50242/17]

708. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if statutory authority attributable to circular letters PI20 2013 and PI05 2017 is solely underpinned by the section 28 guidelines to which they refer; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50243/17]

709. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the policy and or objective in the wind energy development guidelines 2006 including specific references; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50244/17]

710. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if he has been informed of the recent position subsequent to April 2014 by the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment regarding the proposed renewable energy export policy and development framework that is referenced in circular letter PL 20 2013 and endorsed by circular letter PL 05 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50245/17]

713. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Govern-

ment if the wind energy development guidelines 2006 have been subject to strategic environmental assessment in line with requirements under the EU Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50248/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I propose to take Questions Nos. 682, 705 to 710, inclusive, and 713 together.

The Wind Energy Development Guidelines 2006 provide advice to planning authorities on catering for wind energy through the development plan and development management processes. The Guidelines are also intended to ensure a consistency of approach throughout the country in the identification of suitable locations for wind energy development and the treatment of planning applications for such developments. The policy context, including renewable energy policy, for the Guidelines is set out in section 1.2 of Chapter 1.

The 2006 Guidelines were not subject to a strategic environmental assessment (SEA). As the Deputy will be aware, a focused review of the 2006 Guidelines is currently underway.

My predecessor as Minister, in conjunction with my colleague, the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment, announced an emerging “preferred draft approach” to the review of the 2006 Wind Energy Development Guidelines in June 2017. A copy of the announcement is available on my Department’s website at the following link: www.housing.gov.ie/planning/guidelines/wind-energy/coveney-and-naughten-announce-key-development-review-wind-energy-development-guidelines.

It is important to mention that, as part of the overall review, and having regard to the recent ECJ Judgement in a case relating to the Belgian/Wallonian wind energy guidelines, it is proposed to undertake a SEA of the proposed revisions to the 2006 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 public consultation as part of the SEA process will be undertaken in early 2018.

It is estimated that the SEA process will take approximately 9 months and tendering to engage the necessary expertise to carry out that process is well advanced. In light of the SEA requirements, it is expected that the Guidelines will not be finalised and come into effect until 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.

With regard to the proposed setback distance requirements in the “preferred draft approach”, which are based on international examples, these are primarily proposed for visual amenity purposes so that the setting of an appropriate setback in any planning determination takes account of turbine size, while also taking account of other factors such as site design and layout, the scale of the project and its effects on the topography and landscape of the area. Furthermore, the “preferred draft approach” requirements in relation to setback distance will also be subject to the need to separately comply with the proposed noise limits in the “preferred draft approach”.

My Department issues periodic advice and guidance by way of circular letters to planning authorities on a range of planning related issues. General Departmental circulars do not have a statutory basis as compared to the Planning Acts, Regulations made under the Acts or any Ministerial Guidelines, Directives or Directions issued under the Acts.

However, Departmental circulars, which are generally advisory in nature, are used as a means for providing information to planning authorities in relation to various legislative provisions and requirements, to outline and clarify Government or Department policy, and to provide practical advice on the implementation of the planning code and general planning matters, with a view to ensuring consistency in approach and implementation by all local authorities.

In addition, under section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as Minister, I am empowered to issue guidelines to planning authorities as may be required. Planning authorities, and, where applicable, An Bord Pleanála must have regard to guidelines issued under section 28 and must apply any specific planning policy requirements therein in the performance of their functions generally under the Planning Acts.

My Department issued circular letter PL 20/2013 on 20 December 2013, the purpose of which was to advise that, in light of developing relevant national policy reviews, local authorities should defer amending their existing Development Plan policies in relation to wind energy and renewable energy generally as part of either the normal cyclical six-yearly review or plan variation processes.

On 3 August 2017, my Department issued circular letter PL 05/2017 which reiterated the advice in previous circular letter PL 20/2013 and provided an update on the review of the 2006 Wind Energy Development Guidelines. However, its primary purpose was to issue new Ministerial section 28 Interim Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Statutory Plans, Renewable Energy and Climate Change, entitled Interim Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Statutory Plans, Renewable Energy and Climate Change – July 2017, with a focus on the administrative procedures which should be carried out, and the national policies relating to renewable energy and wind energy that regard should be taken of, in the adoption or variation of statutory development plans.

Traveller Accommodation

683. **Deputy Pat Buckley** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if his attention has been drawn to the fact that in 2016 and 2017 Cork County Council drew down none of the money allocated for Traveller accommodation despite a clear need for new developments including in the case of persons (details supplied). [50489/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Damien English): In accordance with the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998, housing authorities have statutory responsibility for the assessment of the accommodation needs of Travellers and the preparation, adoption and implementation of multi-annual Traveller Accommodation Programmes (TAPs) in their areas. My Department's role is to ensure that there are adequate structures and supports in place to assist the authorities in providing such accommodation, including a national framework of policy, legislation and funding.

The current round of TAPs were adopted in 2014, with the five-year rolling programmes running from 2014 to 2018. These programmes provide a road map for local authority investment priorities over the period. The allocations and recoupment profiles for capital Traveller accommodation projects can vary across housing authorities given the local priorities, circumstances and project timelines as set out in the TAPs.

Accommodation for Travellers is provided across a range of options, including standard local authority, private rented accommodation assisted by the housing authority or voluntary organisations, Traveller-specific accommodation and through their own resources. It is open to

Travellers to opt for any form of accommodation, including Traveller-specific accommodation, and local authority Traveller Accommodation Programmes are intended to reflect these preferences. My Department provides 100% capital funding for Traveller-specific accommodation and also provides funding for accommodation related supports to operate in tandem with the capital programme.

Local authorities submit funding proposals for individual Traveller-specific projects and developments on an annual basis, which are assessed on a case-by-case basis in my Department in advance of allocations being made. In addition, further funding may be considered by my Department throughout the year, also on a case by case basis, in the light of progress across the programme generally.

While my Department does not get involved in the case of individual households, which are a matter for the relevant housing authority, in this case Cork County Council, it is of course a matter of concern when funds available to any local authorities for traveller accommodation are not drawn down. In that regard, the Programme for a Partnership Government commits to establishing a special working group to audit the current delivery and implementation of local authorities' Traveller Accommodation Programmes and consult with stakeholders on key areas of concern. This commitment was underpinned in Rebuilding Ireland: Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness, which provided for the commissioning by the Housing Agency, on behalf of my Department, of an expert, independent review of capital and current funding for Traveller-specific accommodation for the period 2000 to date, having regard to the targets contained in the local authority TAPs and actual units delivered, the current status of the accommodation funded and the funding provided for accommodation maintenance and other supports.

This report was finalised and submitted to the National Traveller Accommodation Committee (NTACC) for consideration at its meeting on 28 August 2017. The NTACC is a statutorily-appointed Committee, comprising key stakeholders, including Traveller representative groups, to advise the Minister with responsibility in relation to Traveller accommodation matters. On foot of its considerations of the report, the NTACC collectively agreed to advise me to establish an Expert Group to examine and make recommendations on issues regarding Traveller accommodation policy, strategy and implementation. This is in keeping with the Programme for Partnership Government and I have agreed to proceed with the establishment of this Expert Group.

I have also agreed that a review of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998 should be part of the work of the Expert Group. The composition, terms of reference and methodology of this Expert Group are currently being formulated with a view to it being in place as soon as possible.

Local Authority Funding

684. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if his Department will allocate more funding to Mountmellick following the recent flash flooding which has caused damage to homes, businesses and roads in County Laois; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50623/17]

685. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if his Department will allocate funding to Laois County Council for Mountmellick and other areas in County Laois following the recent flash flooding which has caused damage to homes businesses and roads; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50624/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government

(Deputy Damien English): I propose to take Questions Nos. 684 and 685 together.

Since 2009, my Department has made financial support available to assist local authorities to cover the costs of clean-up and necessary immediate works associated with significant emergency events, including flooding. This is in recognition of the exceptional nature of activities carried out by local authorities in responding to severe weather emergencies and the fact that the costs of these unprogrammed activities cannot be met from within existing resources.

My Department has written to all local authorities inviting them to submit claims for the recoupment of exceptional costs associated with the response to and clean-up following Ex-hurricane Ophelia, and is liaising with Laois County Council with regard to the recoupment of its exceptional response and clean-up costs associated with the flooding event in Mountmellick on 22 November.

Funding of repair of public infrastructure is undertaken by the relevant Department in line with its sectoral responsibility. Capital costs associated with infrastructural damage, for example damage to the roads network and coastal protection infrastructure (where relevant), are not included therefore under the above arrangements.

I am aware also that a number of emergency humanitarian support schemes have been put in place to assist households and small businesses affected by the recent flooding event in Laois.

The Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection confirmed on 23 November that its Humanitarian Assistance Scheme is available to assist people in Laois whose homes are damaged by flooding and who are not in a position to meet costs for essential needs, household items and in some instances structural repair. The scheme is means tested and assistance is not provided for losses which are covered by insurance or for commercial and business losses.

Financial support under the Humanitarian Assistance Scheme is targeted initially at the immediate needs of those who may have been directly impacted by the flooding (such as clothing and food) with further support available (financial support for household items and structural repair) as the clean-up operations begin. More information on the Scheme is available at: www.welfare.ie/en/Pages/Humanitarian-Assistance-Scheme.aspx.

In addition, the Department of Defence has activated an Emergency Humanitarian Scheme for small businesses, community, voluntary and sporting bodies, to be operated by the Irish Red Cross. The scheme provides temporary emergency humanitarian support to small businesses that have been unable to secure flood insurance and have been impacted by flooding. It is intended as a contribution towards the costs of returning business premises to their pre-flood condition including the replacement of flooring, fixtures, fittings and damaged stock.

The scheme is targeted at small businesses (up to 20 employees) and has two stages: the first stage commenced immediately and will provide a contribution of up to €5,000, depending on the scale of damage incurred. In the event that businesses have incurred significant damages above €5,000, the second stage will provide a means to seek further support. However, this will require a more detailed assessment.

Further information, including application forms and eligibility criteria, are available on the Irish Red Cross website, at:

www.redcross.ie/news-and-events/laois-humanitarian-support-scheme/.

Local Authority Boundaries

686. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the engagement he has had with the implementation group of the boundary between Cork city and county councils; and the position regarding the negotiations between the two local authorities. [49925/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I established the Cork Local Government Implementation Oversight Group to oversee arrangements for the alteration of the boundary between the respective areas of jurisdiction of Cork City Council and Cork County Council, in light of the recommendation in the report of the Cork Expert Advisory Group.

The group submitted an interim implementation plan in September 2017 as requested by Government and indicated that a report on the boundary issue would be submitted by year end. The Chairman of the Group has confirmed to my Department that this work is proceeding in accordance with their terms of reference and I understand that the executive of both Cork local authorities are engaging as part of this process. I have had no direct engagement with the three members of the Group and I await their report which I will consider in due course.

Appointments to State Boards Data

687. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of vacancies in each State board under the aegis of his Department, in tabular form. [49939/17]

693. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the names of persons he has appointed to each State board under the aegis of his Department that have not come from the Public Appointments Service list of suitable candidates, in tabular form. [50001/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I propose to take Questions Nos. 687 and 693 together.

Details in relation to the membership of State Boards under the aegis of my Department, including the dates of appointment and mechanisms of appointment, are available on the Department's website at the following link:

www.housing.gov.ie/corporate/transparency-data/appointments-state-boards/appointments-declg-state-boards.

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

A "unitary board structure" is in place for Ervia and its subsidiaries, Irish Water and Gas Networks Ireland. An overarching non-executive board has overall responsibility and accountability for the performance of the Ervia Group. The Boards of the two principal Ervia subsidiaries, Irish Water and Gas Networks Ireland, are executive-only boards.

The Public Appointments Service portal www.stateboards.ie offers a single dedicated point

of contact to all Government Departments, as a support to the existing State Board appointment procedures. This service provides a mechanism for Departments to advertise board vacancies and it gives prospective candidates an opportunity to register their general interest in a position on a State Board and to be alerted to upcoming vacancies. This process for appointments to State Boards includes an assessment of the skills and competencies required to be a member of the relevant Board.

A process is underway to fill a vacancy in An Bord Pleanála and a further Board member position which can be added to the Board's complement under its governing legislation. There is also potential for a further member to be appointed to the Board of the Housing Agency.

Local Infrastructure Housing Activation Fund

688. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the supports he has put in place to enable the development of residentially zoned lands in the Dublin 15 area of Fingal County Council to the south of the Dunboyne railway line at Barnhill; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49947/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The first call for proposals under the Local Infrastructure Housing Activation Fund (LIHAF) was issued to all local authorities in August 2016 and 34 projects received preliminary approval in March 2017.

Fingal County Council submitted four projects under the call in October 2016, including a distributor road in Donabate, an access road in Oldtown/Mooretown, road upgrade, wetlands and park in Baldoyle Stapolin and a distributor road in Barnhill. Funding was approved for three of these projects in the amount of €26.58m. However, while the Barnhill project was assessed as meriting funding, it was not possible to include this project in the March 2017 approvals, within the overall limited level of funding available.

As part of Budget 2018, I announced an additional €50 million funding which will be available for a second LIHAF call and which will again be subject to matching funding of 25% by local authorities. This capital funding will facilitate the provision of more public infrastructure to unlock further sites and activate more housing supply.

A further call for proposals under LIHAF is likely early in 2018 and it will be open to all local authorities to submit new projects or resubmit previous unsuccessful projects for consideration at that time.

Water Services Funding

689. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government his plans for the ongoing review of funding supports for group water schemes; the length of time the review will take; the lead official in his Department working on the review; the organisations and persons that have been consulted to date; the opportunities available to individual group water schemes or interested third parties to engage with the consultation. [49952/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): In its report published in April 2017, the Joint Oireachtas Committee on the Future Funding of Domestic Water Services recommended that the principles of equity of treatment and equivalent financial support be applied equally between households using public water services

and those availing of private water services. It recommended that the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government conduct a review, in coordination with the National Federation of Group Water Schemes and other relevant stakeholders, to quantify what additional investment is required to equalise treatment between households. It recommended that following such a review, identified investment be provided.

As an initial step in reviewing the supports available to the rural water community my Department is currently in discussions with the National Federation of Group Water Schemes, the representative body for the group water sector, on the future subsidy levels for group water schemes. I expect this review to be concluded shortly in order to allow for any subsidy changes to be introduced from 1 January 2018.

Separate to the initial review of group water scheme subsidy levels, I intend to establish a working group, chaired at Assistant Secretary level, to conduct a wider review of investment needs and rural water services, focusing on issues such as governance, supervision and monitoring of the sector, and capital investment requirements. I would expect that this Group will engage widely with relevant stakeholders and will aim to complete its work by mid-2018.

Water Services Funding

690. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the funding his Department provides to a group (details supplied) on an annual basis since the group was established. [49953/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Funding is provided through my Department's Rural Water Programme to the National Federation of Group Water Schemes to support their work within the group water sector. The funding provided to the Federation since its formation in 1998 is set out in the table hereunder. Following a routine internal audit in 2013 which highlighted the accumulation of cash surpluses by the Federation, reduced funding was provided in 2013, 2014 and 2015. Funding levels to the Federation are being progressively restored since 2016.

Year	Amount
1998	€126,973.81
1999	€317,434.52
2000	€317,434.52
2001	€327,404.23
2002	€441,147.73
2003	€506,066.31
2004	€507,895.23
2005	€507,895.23
2006	€507,895.23
2007	€509,892.23
2008	€507,895.23
2009	€507,895.23
2010	€507,895.23
2011	€507,895.23
2012	€450,000.00
2013	€256,251.23

Year	Amount
2014	€56,252.06
2015	€58,414.28
2016	€366,168.48
2017 (to 24 November 2017)	€272,216.29
Total	€7,560,922.30

Water and Sewerage Schemes Funding

691. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the capital investment by his Department in individual group water schemes in each of the years 2014 to 2016 and to date in 2017, in tabular form. [49954/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): My Department's Rural Water Programme, prior to 2016, provided capital funding to group water schemes through a series of funding measures based on block grants. The block grants were made annually to local authorities who administer the programme on behalf of my Department. These block grants, enabling capital works to group water schemes, were made under the following measures of the programme:

- Measure 1 – Quality Deficient Group Water Schemes
- Measure 2 – Water Conservation – Network Upgrades
- Measure 3 – New Group Water Schemes
- Measure 4 – Specific Source Protection Works
- Measure 5 – Capital Replacement Works.

Details of the amounts recouped to the relevant local authorities under these measures are outlined in the tables below for the years 2014 and 2015. Details of funding for individual group water schemes are available from the relevant local authorities.

The 2014 payments to local authorities under Measures 1-5 of the Rural Water Programme are outlined in the table below.

Local Authority	Measure 1	Measure 2	Measure 3	Measure 4	Measure 5	Total
Carlow		€405,923.27		€7,650.00	€10,290.00	€423,863.27
Cavan		€550,000.00		€25,500.00	€13,173.47	€588,673.47
Clare	€33,651.00					€33,651.00
Cork	€85,863.79	€81,311.00				€167,174.79
Donegal	€113,708.01	€30,329.80				€144,037.81
Galway	€702,646.68	€464,970.03		€51,000.00		€1,218,616.71
Kerry	€492,539.63			€5,100.00		€497,639.63
Kildare	€3,448.99					€3,448.99
Kilkenny	€217,418.82	€93,323.09			€24,636.38	€335,378.29
Laois	€266,072.38	€183,143.13	€16,317.40	€12,750.00	€10,291.02	€488,573.93
Leitrim	€0.00	€150,920.38		€2,550.00		€153,470.38
Limerick	€550,557.93	€134,199.44		€28,050.00	€194,561.56	€907,368.93
Longford	€144,681.18		€3,554.70	€5,100.00		€153,335.88
Louth	€133,117.18	€84,554.55	€826.31			€218,498.04
Mayo	€1,125,625.53	€417,170.92		€45,900.00		€1,588,696.45
Meath	€0.00				€37,065.25	€37,065.25
Monaghan	€12,000.00	€594,721.11		€5,099.98		€611,821.09

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Local Authority	Measure 1	Measure 2	Measure 3	Measure 4	Measure 5	Total
North Tipperary	€21,642.45	€454,504.78				€476,147.23
Offaly	€56,000.00	€398,621.92				€454,621.92
Roscommon	€1,125,070.16	€387,953.22		€17,850.00		€1,530,873.38
Sligo	€609,863.19					€609,863.19
South Tipperary	€0.00	€108,144.20		€2,550.00		€110,694.20
Waterford	€55,889.36					€55,889.36
Westmeath	€38,331.16	€27,449.89	€21,635.57	€2,550.00		€89,966.62
Wexford	€0.00			€12,750.00	€11,726.93	€24,476.93
Wicklow	€127,598.00	€11,653.50		€10,200.00	€10,291.02	€159,742.52
Total	€5,915,725.44	€4,578,894.23	€42,333.98	€234,599.98	€312,035.63	€11,083,589.26

The 2015 payments to local authorities under Measures 1-5 of the Rural Water Programme are outlined in the table below.

Local Authority	Measure 1	Measure 2	Measure 3	Measure 4	Measure 5	Total
Carlow		€150,645.84				€150,645.84
Cavan		€496,668.65		€5,100.00	€581,671.00	€1,083,439.65
Clare	€103,405.69	€147,228.80	€2,607.92	€7,650.00		€260,892.41
Cork	€147,926.00	€350,892.00	€25,902.64	€30,600.00		€555,320.64
Donegal	€22,917.19	€54,469.07		€5,100.00		€82,486.26
Galway	€1,441,411.27	€900,449.94		€10,200.00		€2,352,061.21
Kerry	€198,695.18		€13,338.72			€212,033.90
Kildare	€25,034.71	€81,175.27		€7,650.00		€113,859.98
Kilkenny	€298,011.22	€117,889.57		€15,300.00		€431,200.79
Laois	€233,751.46	€201,953.41				€435,704.87
Leitrim	€4,658.23	€59,527.69				€64,185.92
Limerick	€236,167.14	€388,521.50		€2,550.00	€96,765.07	€724,003.71
Longford			€36,663.81			€36,663.81
Louth		€182,896.24				€182,896.24
Mayo	€763,609.83	€810,256.23				€1,573,866.06
Meath		€203,856.85		€2,550.00		€206,406.85
Monaghan	€249,999.99	€487,499.44				€737,499.43
Offaly		€407,519.00				€407,519.00
Roscommon	€447,309.90	€192,696.57		€7,850.00		€647,856.47
Sligo	€249,219.40	€38,637.95		€17,850.00		€305,707.35
Tipperary	€92,954.74	€366,192.01				€459,146.75
Waterford		€55,099.90	€2,814.23			€57,914.13
Westmeath		€22,984.32				€22,984.32
Wexford		€305,497.50				€305,497.50
Wicklow	€25,875.70			€7,650.00		€33,525.70
Total	€4,540,947.65	€6,022,557.75	€81,327.32	€120,050.00	€678,436.07	€11,443,318.79

In 2016, my Department introduced a multi-annual approach to funding the Rural Water Programme. This new Multi-annual Rural Water Programme 2016–2018 is transitioning from block grants to a scheme based funding approach under the programme. My Department recoups capital funding to local authorities who continue to administer the programme on behalf of the Department. My Department is working towards collating expenditure on both a measure and individual scheme basis from 2018 onwards.

Individual scheme and block based grant funding for group water schemes were made under the following measures of the new programme:

- Measure 1 - Environmental and public health compliance (group water sector)
- Measure 2 - Enhancement of existing schemes (group water sector)
- Measure 3 - Rural development (group water sector)

- Measure 4 - Transition of group schemes (water and waste water) to public water sector (Irish Water)

- Measure 5 - Innovation and Research.

Measure 1 is transitioning to an individual scheme based approach in 2017 (with some remaining block grants). Measures 3, 4 and 5 are scheme based from 2016. Measure 2 continues to be a block grant based approach.

Details of the expenditure by the relevant local authorities under these measures are outlined in the tables below for the years 2016 and 2017 (to 27/11/2017). Details of funding for individual group water schemes are available from the relevant local authorities.

The 2016 payments to local authorities under Measures 1-5 of the Rural Water Programme are outlined in the table below.

Local Authority	Measure 1	Measure 2	Measure 3	Measure 4	Measure 5	Total
Carlow	€0.00	€53,606.68		€0.00	€0.00	€53,606.68
Cavan	€2,875.74	€315,550.36		€0.00	€2,500.00	€320,926.10
Clare	€41,268.60	€187,454.80		€0.00	€0.00	€228,723.40
Cork	€35,664.07	€112,518.68		€174,902.51	€0.00	€323,085.26
Donegal	€4,629.17	€0.00		€1,993.83	€0.00	€6,623.00
Galway	€111,885.66	€991,013.96		€8,884.69	€2,610.01	€1,114,394.32
Kerry	€0.00	€0.00		€117,322.81	€0.00	€117,322.81
Kildare	€0.00	€43,979.74		€0.00	€0.00	€43,979.74
Kilkenny	€42,348.30	€120,046.48		€0.00	€0.00	€162,394.78
Laois	€65,124.85	€179,115.44	€1,771.20	€173,843.04	€5,198.85	€425,053.38
Leitrim	€0.00	€84,803.11		€5,163.60	€0.00	€89,966.71
Limerick	€21,444.86	€119,938.59		€0.00	€0.00	€141,383.45
Longford	€20,464.05	€0.00	€14,883.36	€0.00	€0.00	€35,347.41
Louth	€2,000.00	€172,851.32		€0.00	€58,075.00	€232,926.32
Mayo	€3,632,867.48	€775,142.82	€269,734.60	€142,887.41	€0.00	€4,820,632.31
Meath	€0.00	€212,761.57		€0.00	€0.00	€212,761.57
Monaghan	€36,245.95	€417,450.63		€0.00	€7,210.00	€460,906.58
Offaly	€167,424.00	€100,681.50		€0.00	€0.00	€268,105.50
Roscommon	€145,944.13	€254,622.85		€0.00	€0.00	€400,566.98
Sligo	€0.00	€7,650.00		€1,897.79	€0.00	€9,547.79
Tipperary	€130,756.56	€298,972.16	€15,300.00	€0.00	€6,849.99	€451,878.71
Waterford	€41,330.86	€0.00		€0.00	€0.00	€41,330.86
Westmeath	€9,499.95	€0.00		€10,962.37	€0.00	€20,462.32
Wexford	€0.00	€178,615.98		€0.00	€5,475.86	€184,091.84
Wicklow	€14,165.00	€99,014.65		€0.00	€0.00	€113,179.65
Total	€4,525,939.23	€4,725,791.32	€301,689.16	€637,858.05	€87,919.71	€10,279,197.47

The 2017 payments to local authorities under Measures 1-5 of the Rural Water Programme (up to and including 27 November 2017) are outlined in the table below.

Local Authority	Measure 1	Measure 2	Measure 3	Measure 4	Measure 5	Total
Carlow		€73,374.42				€73,374.42
Cavan						€0.00
Clare		€90,330.31			€16,767.50	€107,097.81
Cork						€0.00
Donegal						€0.00
Galway	€294,642.39	€38,017.16		€10,909.15	€21,792.00	€365,360.70
Kerry	€4,256.25			€70,385.47		€74,641.72
Kildare						€0.00
Kilkenny		€21,184.67				€21,184.67
Laois	€7,113.05	€11,778.62		€166,740.39		€185,632.06
Leitrim				€4,034.78		€4,034.78

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Local Authority	Measure 1	Measure 2	Measure 3	Measure 4	Measure 5	Total
Limerick		€90,365.20				€90,365.20
Longford			€2,456.40	€7,430.40		€9,886.80
Louth						€0.00
Mayo	€3,258,646.90	€118,250.68	€277,595.78	€678,920.71	€59,313.97	€4,392,728.04
Meath		€66,353.48				€66,353.48
Monaghan		€135,350.42			€19,737.80	€155,088.22
Offaly	€12,500.00					€12,500.00
Roscommon	€31,294.58	€127,504.29				€158,798.87
Sligo	€38,258.07	€6,818.46				€45,076.53
Tipperary	€43,265.05	€143,915.98				€187,181.03
Waterford						€0.00
Westmeath						€0.00
Wexford						€0.00
Wicklow						€0.00
Total	€3,689,976.29	€923,243.69	€280,052.18	€938,420.90	€117,611.27	€5,949,304.33

Voluntary Housing Sector

692. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the details of the registered voluntary housing associations; the amount spent on administration of these associations in each of the past five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49973/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Under Section 6 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1992, housing authorities may provide assistance to Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs) for the provision and management of housing accommodation. As Minister, I am empowered to grant approved status to housing bodies for this purpose. AHBs are independent, not-for-profit organisations, which can also include housing co-operatives, which are housing organisations controlled by their members/tenants who actively participate in setting their policies and making decisions.

Information in relation to specific administration costs of these organisations is not held in my Department. The day-to-day administration and financial management of AHBs is a matter for their individual Boards. I have no role in relation to such matters, nor does my Department collate data relating to the administration costs in AHBs.

To date, there are 547 bodies with approved status. The register of AHBs can be found on my Department's website at:

www.housing.gov.ie/housing/social-housing/voluntary-and-cooperative-housing/register-housing-bodies-approved-status.

The Housing (Regulation of Registered Housing Providers) Bill and the underlying policy, which was formulated in consultation with the sector, intends to establish a Regulator to oversee the effective governance, financial management and performance of voluntary and co-operative housing bodies. My Department is working with the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel to finalise the text of the Bill with the aim of publication during the current Oireachtas session. Until such time as the legislation is enacted and the statutory system of regulation is put in place, the interim regulatory arrangements in operation since 2014 will remain in operation.

Question No. 693 answered with Question No. 687.

Voluntary Housing Sector

694. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government his plans to ensure the necessary actions are taken to allow a housing body to purchase properties (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50034/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I can confirm that Clúid Housing Association have received approval from my Department under the Capital Advance Leasing Facility (CALF) to acquire 13 homes at the site concerned. I understand from the local authority that the units are currently undergoing refurbishment works, which are due to be finished early in 2018. Once these works are complete, the approved housing body (AHB) will proceed to close the sale with the vendor.

CALF is available as a low interest loan provided by local authorities (and recouped by my Department) to AHBs. This funding allows AHBs access to early working capital (up to 30% of the relevant costs) for the purchase, construction or refurbishment of units which will then be made available for social housing purposes under the Social Housing Current Expenditure Programme (SHCEP). Low interest rate borrowings are available to AHBs from the Housing Finance Agency and other private finance streams to support the financing of the balance. The AHB effectively uses the CALF approval for the capital injection of up to 30% and the ongoing commitment of lease income under the Payment and Availability Agreement to leverage the balance finance required. Once an AHB has secured the property and signed the Payment and Availability Agreement with the local authority, they use the lease income to service the borrowings.

Properties made available under the CALF scheme are used to accommodate households from the local authority waiting list. Leased properties are allocated to tenants, in accordance with the relevant local authority's allocation scheme.

Homelessness Strategy

695. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if he will report on issues identified in the reporting of homelessness statistics by local authorities, by local authority; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50047/17]

696. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if statistical analysis has been conducted on homelessness figures reported by local authorities; if this analysis has been used to identify potential issues with reporting; if these issues have been identified; if these issues have been investigated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50048/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I propose to take Questions Nos. 695 and 696 together.

Housing authorities submit reports to my Department on a monthly basis regarding the number of individuals utilising emergency accommodation arrangements that are funded by housing authorities; these official homeless reports are published on my Department's website and can be accessed using the following link: www.housing.gov.ie/housing/homelessness/other/homelessness-data.

The data included in these reports is produced by housing authorities using the Pathway Accommodation & Support System (PASS). PASS is used in all homeless accommodation services that are funded by housing authorities. PASS was developed, and is maintained, by Dublin City Council as an integrated data information system and is provided as a national shared service. PASS allows housing authorities to produce good quality, timely data in rela-

tion to homelessness and, in quantifying its ongoing dynamics, supports the development and implementation of appropriate policy. The National PASS Office, within Dublin City Council, assists housing authorities on an ongoing basis with any technical issues they may have in relation to the operation and reporting of PASS.

If the Deputy provides more specific information in relation to the issues referred to, I will have the matters involved considered.

Ministerial Communications

697. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if he has used a private email account to send or receive official documents or positions on Brexit; and if so, the details of this correspondence. [50062/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): In June of this year I received a copy of a press statement from the Government Press Office by email to my private email account, concerning the Taoiseach's visit to London to meet Prime Minister May to discuss, among other things, Brexit. With the exception of the copying of that public communication, all official documentation in relation to Brexit is sent and received through email accounts maintained and managed by my Department's ICT unit.

Departmental Bodies Data

698. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the bodies under the aegis his Department in which his Department provides in excess of €1 million funding per annum to these bodies; the public funding received by these bodies; the bodies in which 50% or more of its income comes from public sources; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50118/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The information requested in respect of bodies under the aegis of my Department who have been allocated funding in excess of €1 million per annum from my Department in 2017 is set out in the following table.

Name of Body/Organisation	Estimated Funding in 2017 €m	50% funding from public sources - Yes/No
An Bord Pleanála	16.1	Yes
Housing and Sustainable Communities Agency	97.2	Yes
Residential Tenancies Board	2.8	No
Local Government Management Agency (LGMA)	5.2	Yes
Irish Water	1,200*	Yes

*Includes capital contribution and funding in relation to the refund of water charges.

Emergency Accommodation Provision

699. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if his attention has been drawn to the practice of some local authorities of providing

families that are homeless but have not met the requirements of housing circular 41/2012 with emergency accommodation on a night-by-night basis only; if his attention has been further drawn to a legal reason a local authority cannot provide emergency homeless accommodation to a family that does not meet the provision of housing circular 41/2012 for four consecutive nights or more; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50126/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Under the Housing Act 1988 it is a matter for the housing authority concerned to determine whether a person is regarded as homeless; Section 2 of the Act sets out the requirements in this regard. Any person regarded as homeless may be placed into temporary emergency accommodation without the requirement to undergo a social housing assessment and be approved for social housing support; these arrangements give housing authorities the flexibility that is essential to respond quickly and effectively to the various needs of cases that may present to them.

In order to qualify for social housing support, a household's long-term housing need and eligibility must be determined by a housing authority through a social housing assessment under section 20 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009 and associated Regulations. As social housing support is intended to address a household's long-term housing need it is expected that any household applying for such support should have a long-term right to reside in the State. Departmental Housing Circular 41/2012 sets out the appropriate criteria that housing authorities can use to accept someone as having a long-term right to reside, and therefore be eligible to apply to be assessed for social housing support.

Given that statutory responsibility in relation to the provision of homeless accommodation rests with individual housing authorities, my Department has no role in relation to operational issues such as placements of particular individuals or families into emergency accommodation. It is a matter for individual authorities to obtain legal advice as required in the execution of their statutory functions.

Housing Assistance Payment Data

700. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of homeless HAP tenancies created in the first six months of 2017; the number of these used to prevent homelessness; and the number used to support individuals and families to exit section 10 funded homeless accommodation. [50127/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I am advised by the Dublin Region Homeless Executive that during the first six months of 2017 a total of 771 households entered Homeless HAP tenancies; of these, 519 were used to secure a tenancy prior to a homeless household entering emergency accommodation, and therefore are classified as preventative, with the remaining 252 therefore related to households exiting emergency accommodation.

Homeless Persons Data

701. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of adult persons who have exited section 10-funded homeless accommodation in the first six months of 2017; and the housing tenures to which they have exited. [50128/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Based on housing authority reports, during the first six months of 2017 a total of 2,060 adults,

who were assessed and deemed homeless by housing authorities within the meaning of Section 2 of the Housing Act 1988, exited homelessness into independent tenancies. This figure includes homeless adults who exited Section 10 funded homeless accommodation and also homeless adults prevented from entering emergency accommodation.

The tenure types to which these adults moved are set out below:

- local authority tenancies - 453;
- approved housing body tenancies - 376;
- private rented tenancies - 1,231.

Rural Resettlement Scheme

702. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the schemes available to assist households in relocating from urban to rural areas; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50139/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The Government's Action Plan for Rural Development: Realising our Potential has a clear objective of working across Government Departments to deliver a co-ordinated group of strategies to ensure the success of vibrant rural communities across Ireland.

My Department works closely with the Department of Rural and Community Development on rural housing issues. In relation to social housing, it is possible already for people to move between local authorities under the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) Scheme.

Arising from the Housing Summit in September, my Department is currently examining additional ways to facilitate homeless households wishing to relocate to rural areas.

Rental Accommodation Scheme Data

703. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of RAS tenancies active at the end of each year from 2005 to 2016 and to date in 2017; and the annual cost of RAS tenancies for each year. [50157/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS) has been an important contributor to social housing supply since its introduction on a pilot basis in 2005. From its commencement in late 2005 to 31 September 2017, some 34,282 households have been transferred from Rent Supplement to RAS.

The number of households in RAS constantly varies as contracts end, tenants move on to other properties, landlords withdraw from the scheme, new tenancies are allocated or vacancies in contracted units are filled. While data from 2005 to 2010 is not readily available, data relating to the number of households availing of support under RAS from 2011 to 2016 is available on my Department's website at the following link:

www.housing.gov.ie/housing/social-housing/social-and-affordable/overall-social-housing-provision.

Data relating to the cost of supporting RAS tenancies from 2011 to 2016 can also be found

on my Department's website at the above link. €134.3 million was provided in Budget 2017 to support the cost of the Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS). Monies are provided on an Exchequer neutral basis to meet the costs of persons transferring from the Rent Supplement (RS) Scheme to RAS.

Social and Affordable Housing Data

704. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of part V units delivered in 2016; and the number delivered to date in 2017. [50159/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Information returned to my Department indicates that there were 69 Part V social housing units delivered in 2016. Based on quarterly returns to the end of Quarter 2 of 2017, a provisional total of 200 social housing units were identified as having been delivered through Part V in the first half of this year.

Question No. 705 to 710, inclusive, answered with Question No. 682.

Wind Energy Guidelines

711. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the action he has taken and the outcome in each individual case (details supplied) in which planning authorities altered wind-energy policies contrary to the advice contained in circular letter PL20/2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50246/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Damien English): The Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) provides the legislative basis for the formulation of statutory local authority plans, and is supplemented by guidelines issued by my Department under section 28 of the Act, which are available on my Department's website at the following web link: www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/migrated-files/en/Publications/DevelopmentandHousing/Planning/FileDownload%2C14468%2Cen.pdf.

In addition, from time to time, my Department issues circulars, which are generally advisory in nature and are used as a means for providing information to planning authorities in relation to various legislative provisions and requirements, to outline and clarify Government or Departmental policy, and to provide practical advice on the implementation of the planning code and general planning matters.

Circular letter PL20/2013 advised planning authorities not to amend their development plan policies with respect to wind energy developments until such time as the Government's focused review of the 2006 statutory Planning Guidelines on Wind Energy Development was completed.

Most of the local authorities referred to have had to review their development plans in line with statutory timelines. They have generally retained pre-existing wind energy policies derived from the 2006 Guidelines; however, where the drafts of such plans departed from the 2006 Guidelines, my Department issued statutory observations on such departures, which planning authorities responded to and addressed in the context of the legal and policy framework pertaining at that time.

Notwithstanding these interactions, in certain circumstances as the details below show,

where the reviews of such plans resulted in a substantive breach of national policy objectives and statutory requirements, relevant Ministerial/Departmental functions in the statutory plan-making process have been exercised up to the point of issuing directions to planning authorities to amend development plans, under procedures set out in Section 31 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).

Section 31 Directions were issued in respect of the following four County Development Plans:

- Roscommon: On 14 April 2014, Roscommon County Council was directed to amend its renewable energy strategy for wind energy, as it was not in compliance with the 2006 guidelines.

- Donegal: On 3 October 2014, Donegal County Council was issued with a direction in relation to the County Development Plan wind energy objectives, which were not consistent with the 2006 guidelines; this direction was quashed following Judicial Review.

- Wicklow: On 14 February 2017, Wicklow County Council was directed to amend Objective CCE6 in its County Development Plan, as it was not consistent with the 2006 wind energy guidelines.

- Laois: On 28 September 2017, Laois County Council was directed to amend its County Development Plan because its wind energy potential mapping was not consistent with the 2006 Guidelines and had failed to comply with EU Directive SEA requirements.

County Development Plans

712. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if the planning section within his Department had sight of and considered a report endorsed by the planning authority of County Donegal entitled submission in relation to amendment document Option 3 revised to the working draft county development plan 2014 to 2018 prior to making its submission to the draft County Donegal development plan 2018 to 2024; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50247/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Damien English): The report referred to in the Question would appear to have been a submission to the planning authority, in the context of the internal processes relating to the preparation of its draft development plan.

The documentation forwarded by planning authorities to my Department in the context of my statutory role as consultee in the development plan preparation process is confined to the written statement and maps and environmental reports, as provided for under Section 12 (1) (a) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).

Therefore, my Department does not have sight of submissions and reports internal to the deliberative process undertaken by planning authorities in the context of the preparation of their development plans and accordingly, my Department would not have had sight of the document referred to in the question, prior to making its submission in relation to the draft County Donegal Development Plan 2018 - 2024.

My Department was emailed with a copy of the submission by a member of Donegal County Council on 10th November 2017 after my Department's observations were forwarded to the planning authority. However, my Department has no statutory role in commenting on submis-

sions made on the development plan preparation process outside of the provisions under Section 12(1)(a) above.

In general terms, therefore, observations by my Department are made only in the context of the written statement and maps and environmental reports as prepared and adopted by the relevant planning authority for public consultation.

Question No. 713 answered with Question No. 682.

County Development Plans

714. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government his views on whether the replication of elements of policy by other planning authorities is a consideration that falls within the express or implied statutory obligations of a planning authority when formulating an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of its functional area; if so, the particular provisions within the Planning and Development Acts, associated regulations, guidelines or otherwise, that provide for same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50249/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Damien English): Planning and development is one of the most important functions of local authorities. Development plans and local area plans, as adopted by the elected members in line with the broader regulatory and policy context for planning, set the local policy context for individual decisions on planning applications by the planning authority.

The Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) provides the legislative basis for the formulation of statutory local authority plans, and is supplemented by guidelines issued by my Department under section 28 of the Act, which are available on my Department's website at the following web link: www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/migrated-files/en/Publications/DevelopmentandHousing/Planning/FileDownload%2C14468%2Cen.pdf.

Section 9(4) of the Act requires that, in making a development plan, planning authorities must have regard to the development plans of adjoining planning authorities and co-ordinate the objectives of their development plan with the objectives of adjoining plans, except where the planning authority considers it to be inappropriate or not feasible to do so.

Moreover, section 9(5) of the Act requires that planning authorities take into account any significant likely effects of the implementation of their development plans on the area of adjoining planning authorities, having regard in particular to the observations or submissions of those authorities.

County Development Plans

715. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the process followed by his Department in making a determination as to whether his recommendations have been complied with in the context of section 12(5)(a) of the Planning and Development Acts 2017 (as amended); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50250/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Damien English): The process in relation to making a local authority Development Plan is a statutory one, set out in the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).

My Department examines the development plans and local area plans as adopted compared to recommendations and requests made at the public consultation stages in my capacity as statutory consultee.

The examination of the plans undertaken by my Department pays particular attention to the degree to which recommendations and requests made in relation to adherence to the legislative and policy requirements as laid out in the Act have been followed through in the final decision of the relevant authority, including any acknowledgement of such departures provided for in the section referred to.

Local Authority Housing Mortgages

716. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government further to Question No. 497 of 14 November 2017, the definition of a satisfactory credit record; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50257/17]

717. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government further to Question No. 497 of 14 November 2017, if applicants for local authority mortgages who are discharged bankrupts come under the prohibited categories of those deemed bankrupt or are subject to bankruptcy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50258/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I propose to take Questions Nos. 716 and 717 together.

Applicants for local authority house purchase loans must be of good credit standing and have a satisfactory credit record. The Housing Agency provides a central credit assessment service to local authorities and credit checks are undertaken as part of the credit assessment process. The final decision on loan approval is a matter for the relevant local authority and its credit committee on a case-by-case basis. Decisions on all housing loan applications must be made in accordance with the statutory credit policy, that underpins the scheme, in order to ensure prudence and consistency in approaches in the best interests of both borrowers and the lending local authorities.

A person who has been discharged from bankruptcy and is eligible in all other respects for a local authority house purchase loan may apply for a loan and will be subject to the same credit assessment process that applies to all applicants.

Planning Issues

718. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government his plans to include quarries under the critical infrastructure legislation thus allowing such developments apply directly to An Bord Pleanála for planning permission in view of the proposed changes to the critical infrastructure legislation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50264/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I have no proposals to amend the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, to classify quarries as strategic infrastructural developments.

Social and Affordable Housing Data

719. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of SHCEP-funded leases in categories (details supplied) for each of the years 2014 to 2016 and to date in 2017; the annual cost for these leases each year; the target number of leases under these categories in each of the years 2018 to 2021; and the estimated cost of these leases in each of these years. [50288/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):

The Government has set out an ambitious set of targets for the delivery of social housing to the period to 2021 in its Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan. A commitment to deliver 50,000 new social housing homes through a range of delivery mechanisms is being supported by a multi-annual Exchequer commitment totalling €6.5 billion over the period of the plan. These targets will be achieved using a combination of building, purchasing and leasing high quality properties to meet the needs of households on local authority waiting lists around the country.

The Social Housing Current Expenditure Programme (SHCEP) will support the delivery of 10,000 of these homes by providing financial support for the leasing of houses and apartments by local authorities and approved housing bodies from a range of different sources. A total of 3,500 properties are targeted to be achieved using the Repair and Leasing Scheme (RLS) which harnesses the potential of existing vacant stock and brings it back into use for social housing. The remaining 6,500 properties to be leased are intended to be secured under long-term lease arrangements from a variety of sources.

In relation to NAMA/SPV leases, NAMA has established a special purpose vehicle (National Asset Residential Property Services Limited ‘NARPS’), to take ownership of properties where there is an established demand and then lease them long-term to an approved housing body or local authority. In these projects, NAMA funds the remediation of the common areas and the completion of the unfinished units, which are often the last remaining incomplete and vacant units in the estates. When the units are complete, NARPS purchase the finished properties and lease them immediately to the approved housing body or local authority. While NAMA is consistently mindful of identifying properties which may be suitable for social housing, the pool of such properties is reducing in line with the reduction in the NAMA loan portfolio and it is unlikely at this point that significant numbers of additional properties will be identified. Information in relation to NAMA delivery for social housing is available on the website for the Housing Agency at the following link:

www.housingagency.ie/Housing/media/Media/Social%20Leasing%20Library/NAMA%20Status%20Reports/Breakdown-by-County-October-2017.pdf.

The number of dwellings supported by the SHCEP in each of the years 2014 to Q3 2017, in the categories sought, are set out in the table below:

Table 1: Delivery 2014 - 2017

Type of lease	2014	2015	2016	2017 (up to end Q3)
AHB/LA Lease	626	652	574	413
NAMA/SPV Leases	120	433	218	258
Repair & Leasing	-	-	-	0
Total	746	1085	792	671

SHCEP funding is used to fund a range of delivery mechanisms, including those outlined in Table 1. Details of the total funding drawn-down by local authorities under SHCEP in 2014, 2015 and 2016 are provided in the Table below. Exchequer funding for SHCEP in 2017 is €84m and it is expected that this funding will be drawn down in full by year end. Data in relation to the cost of each category of lease is not available for the period 2014 to 2017. However, this data will be available for 2018 and subsequent years as a result of changes made to the systems used for the recording of financial data.

Table 2: Costs 2014 - 2017

Total SHCEP Expenditure	Total
2014	€34,844,780
2015	€42,275,724*
2016	€54,028,752

*Of this figure, a total of €7,933,651 was self-funded by local authorities.

The annual number of dwellings targeted for delivery in the 3 categories concerned and set to be funded under SHCEP in each of the years 2018 to 2021 are set out in the table below. These are provisional targets which will be reviewed regularly taking account of progress under each delivery stream.

Table 3: Provisional Targets 2018 - 2021

Type of lease	2018	2019	2020	2021
Lease - AHB/LA long-term lease	200	180	181	300
Lease - NTMA/ISIF Special Purpose Vehicle	1,000	1,000	1,500	1,500
Lease - Repair and Leasing (RLS)	800	950	950	650
Total	2,000	2,130	2,631	2,450

An allocation of €115m has been secured for SHCEP in 2018 – an increase of €31m on the 2017 allocation. The allocations for SHCEP from 2019 to 2021 will form part of the annual Estimates processes.

Local Authority Housing Data

720. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of approved housing applicants; the number of these applicants accessing and using the choice-based letting system for each local authority, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50343/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Details on the number of households qualified for social housing support in each housing authority area are provided in the statutory Summary of Social Housing Assessments. The most recent figures available are the results of the 2016 Summary which are available on my Department's website at the following link:

www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/publications/files/summary_of_social_housing_assessments_2016.pdf.

In line with a commitment given in the Social Housing Strategy 2020, future summaries will now be carried out on an annual basis. I expect the results of the 2017 summary to be available for publication in the coming weeks.

The allocation of social housing support is a matter for the relevant local authority in accordance with the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009 and associated regulations. Section 22 of the 2009 Act requires all housing authorities, as a reserved function, to make an allocation scheme determining the order of priority to be accorded in the allocation of dwellings to households qualified for social housing support and to households approved for a transfer, the allocation of which would, in the opinion of the authority, meet the accommodation needs and requirements of the households.

On 30 September 2016, the Social Housing Allocation (Amendment) Regulations 2016 were made, which required that all local authorities must, if they had not already done so, provide for Choice Based Letting (CBL) as a method of allocation in their housing allocation schemes by 31 December 2016.

Where a local authority, having included a provision on CBL in its allocation scheme, decides to operate a CBL scheme, it must implement it in accordance with Regulations 6 – 11 of the 2011 Regulations. Decisions on which properties are to be included under a CBL scheme is a matter for individual authorities.

Vacant Properties

721. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the progress made to date on action 5.3 of Rebuilding Ireland on work with local authorities to speed up the refurbishment and where possible the re-letting of vacant social housing units; the number of vacant units in the south of Dublin city centre; the average length of time units are vacant in this area, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50346/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Social housing stock can become vacant due to various circumstances as would be expected, and, in the normal course, social homes will be re-let by local authorities, after appropriate repairs are carried out.

All local authorities have been requested to achieve the most efficient turnaround of their vacant social housing stock between lettings through more ongoing maintenance and upgrading of their properties, so as to minimise “down-time”, and quicker identification of new tenants through, for example, the choice-based letting initiative.

In January this year, my Department issued regulations for Standards for Rented Houses and these standards apply to social housing and provide common reletting performance standards across all local authorities. The Voids Programme, introduced in 2014, provides additional support to local authorities in remediating vacant units. This funding is available as an additional support over and above what local authorities provide themselves towards such work.

My Department does not collate data on the length of time local authority dwellings remain vacant or the number of vacant units at any particular time. It is a matter for each local authority to identify and submit details of relevant properties for inclusion in the Voids Programme.

My Department is continuing to engage on an ongoing basis with local authorities with a view to progressing measures to bring as many vacant and underutilised properties as possible back into use. All Chief Executives have been requested to designate vacant home officers in their local authorities to examine Census 2016 and other vacancy data in order to identify - through their Vacant Homes Action Plans - priority “vacant hot-spot areas” and properties that can be quickly brought back into use.

Motor Tax Yield

722. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the motor taxation receipts received in each of the years 2011 to 2016 and to date in 2017, by county, in tabular form. [50359/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Gross motor tax receipts for each licensing authority from January 2011 to the end of October 2017 are set out in the following tables. The online receipts figures include vehicle licences and arrears. Motor tax office receipts figures incorporate vehicle licences, arrears, miscellaneous receipts, trade plates, and goods vehicles trailer licences.

2017 – January to October

Licensing Authority	MTO receipts (€)	Online receipts (€)	Total (€)
Carlow	5,454,794	7,226,152	12,680,946
Cavan	4,819,969	9,405,621	14,225,590
Clare	8,210,071	15,262,210	23,472,281
Cork	25,322,866	79,076,685	104,399,551
Donegal	13,758,113	13,974,355	27,732,468
Dublin City	35,450,009	188,615,415	224,065,424
Galway	15,461,671	33,312,481	48,774,152
Kerry	8,072,670	21,925,040	29,997,710
Kildare	8,840,888	33,714,577	42,555,465
Kilkenny	6,303,356	12,513,521	18,816,877
Laois	6,355,494	8,585,529	14,941,023
Leitrim	2,323,821	3,887,188	6,211,009
Limerick City and County	12,081,673	24,682,420	36,764,093
Longford	3,338,975	4,266,970	7,605,945
Louth	7,677,742	13,097,088	20,774,830
Mayo	9,621,691	16,582,636	26,204,327
Meath	7,859,302	29,579,020	37,438,322
Monaghan	5,138,254	6,959,283	12,097,537
Offaly	5,420,068	9,180,571	14,600,639
Roscommon	6,181,186	7,391,872	13,573,058
Sligo	5,115,192	7,269,443	12,384,635
Tipperary	10,099,980	23,236,323	33,336,303
Waterford City & County	7,609,549	15,014,548	22,624,097
Westmeath	7,564,410	9,665,933	17,230,343
Wexford	10,291,445	21,519,032	31,810,477
Wicklow	7,193,530	22,392,249	29,585,779
Total	245,566,718	638,336,162	883,902,880

2016

Licensing Authority	MTO receipts(€)	Online receipts (€)	Total (€)
Carlow	6,814,097	8,290,941	15,105,038

Licensing Authority	MTO receipts(€)	Online receipts (€)	Total (€)
Cavan	6,029,327	10,680,064	16,709,391
Clare	10,252,804	17,727,771	27,980,575
Cork	32,682,181	91,748,508	124,430,689
Donegal	17,459,261	15,878,437	33,337,698
Dublin City	45,426,953	221,450,439	266,877,392
Galway	19,990,309	38,457,921	58,448,230
Kerry	10,231,237	25,532,662	35,763,899
Kildare	11,389,716	39,174,306	50,564,022
Kilkenny	7,975,519	14,476,768	22,452,287
Laois	7,821,727	9,774,712	17,596,439
Leitrim	3,054,633	4,416,296	7,470,929
Limerick City and County	15,149,511	28,653,379	43,802,890
Longford	4,280,575	4,849,878	9,130,453
Louth	9,911,461	14,991,338	24,902,799
Mayo	12,312,247	18,718,178	31,030,425
Meath	10,190,525	33,812,426	44,002,951
Monaghan	6,464,394	7,641,237	14,105,631
Offaly	6,907,040	10,419,900	17,326,940
Roscommon	7,403,707	8,536,460	15,940,167
Sligo	6,388,795	8,358,811	14,747,606
Tipperary	12,860,867	26,886,852	39,747,719
Waterford City and County	9,442,251	17,359,263	26,801,514
Westmeath	9,741,470	11,016,293	20,757,763
Wexford	12,923,450	24,402,896	37,326,346
Wicklow	9,207,520	26,065,131	35,272,651
Total	312,311,577	739,320,867	1,051,632,444

2015

Licensing Authority	MTO receipts (€)	Online receipts (€)	Total (€)
Carlow	8,011,652	8,360,200	16,371,852
Cavan	7,286,662	10,894,977	18,181,639
Clare	11,856,853	17,902,031	29,758,884
Cork	40,143,820	93,835,284	133,979,104
Donegal	20,061,022	16,010,088	36,071,110
Dublin City	56,170,098	224,434,956	280,605,054
Galway	24,623,358	38,056,654	62,680,012
Kerry	11,868,212	25,988,786	37,856,998
Kildare	14,215,403	39,622,062	53,837,465
Kilkenny	9,736,708	14,661,026	24,397,734
Laois	9,426,748	9,599,035	19,025,783
Leitrim	3,566,591	4,365,316	7,931,907

Questions - Written Answers

Licensing Authority	MTO receipts (€)	Online receipts (€)	Total (€)
Limerick City and County	19,364,590	28,465,221	47,829,811
Longford	5,117,598	4,771,437	9,889,035
Louth	11,793,284	15,205,721	26,999,005
Mayo	14,505,870	18,737,126	33,242,996
Meath	13,162,468	34,184,938	47,347,406
Monaghan	8,775,700	7,832,613	16,608,313
Offaly	8,244,558	10,158,262	18,402,820
Roscommon	8,683,682	8,422,660	17,106,342
Sligo	7,440,772	8,472,576	15,913,348
Tipperary	15,991,541	27,158,588	43,150,129
Waterford City and County	10,815,420	17,528,255	28,343,675
Westmeath	10,573,905	10,989,318	21,563,223
Wexford	16,203,861	24,233,460	40,437,321
Wicklow	10,796,908	26,023,932	36,820,840
Total	378,437,284	745,914,522	1,124,351,806

2014

Licensing Authority	MTO receipts (€)	Online receipts (€)	Total (€)
Carlow	8,983,889	7,702,585	16,686,474
Cavan	8,982,766	9,888,690	18,871,456
Clare	13,841,944	16,922,255	30,764,199
Cork	49,370,096	88,861,171	138,231,267
Donegal	22,785,147	14,784,601	37,569,748
Dublin City	72,938,295	215,592,099	288,530,394
Galway	28,414,853	35,594,610	64,009,463
Kerry	14,711,726	24,190,974	38,902,700
Kildare	17,255,566	38,283,577	55,539,143
Kilkenny	11,455,864	13,772,767	25,228,631
Laois	10,458,892	8,937,426	19,396,318
Leitrim	4,288,064	4,035,818	8,323,882
Limerick City and County	23,363,145	26,102,284	49,465,429
Longford	6,085,035	4,309,866	10,394,901
Louth	13,577,988	14,249,780	27,827,768
Mayo	17,324,540	17,245,923	34,570,463
Meath	15,884,589	33,159,777	49,044,366
Monaghan	10,423,046	6,886,321	17,309,367
Offaly	9,418,021	9,468,207	18,886,228
Roscommon	9,820,152	7,835,772	17,655,924
Sligo	8,547,022	7,873,411	16,420,433
Tipperary	20,128,078	24,562,099	44,690,177

Licensing Authority	MTO receipts (€)	Online receipts (€)	Total (€)
Waterford City and County	12,099,111	17,064,591	29,163,702
Westmeath	12,001,917	10,316,885	22,318,802
Wexford	19,168,906	22,618,852	41,787,758
Wicklow	12,718,765	25,024,173	37,742,938
Total	454,047,417	705,284,514	1,159,331,931

2013

Licensing Authority	MTO receipts (€)	Online receipts (€)	Total (€)
Carlow	9,833,586	6,424,620	16,258,206
Cavan	10,393,832	7,622,085	18,015,917
Clare	16,066,959	14,490,759	30,557,718
Cork	58,152,905	78,994,447	137,147,352
Donegal	25,412,474	12,255,605	37,668,079
Dublin City	93,543,189	191,241,016	284,784,205
Galway	32,690,289	30,007,876	62,698,165
Kerry	17,813,177	20,756,009	38,569,186
Kildare	20,311,957	33,904,790	54,216,747
Kilkenny	12,930,048	11,792,360	24,722,408
Laois	11,370,776	7,282,909	18,653,685
Leitrim	4,894,374	3,193,263	8,087,637
Limerick City	6,217,219	5,028,675	11,245,894
Limerick County	20,237,685	17,185,729	37,423,414
Longford	6,559,835	3,337,077	9,896,912
Louth	15,035,177	11,467,194	26,502,371
Mayo	19,532,848	13,838,226	33,371,074
Meath	19,480,718	27,593,246	47,073,964
Monaghan	11,522,639	5,156,187	16,678,826
Offaly	10,584,322	7,748,979	18,333,301
Roscommon	10,614,764	6,166,827	16,781,591
Sligo	9,725,944	6,388,277	16,114,221
Tipperary North	9,843,461	10,474,949	20,318,410
Tipperary South	14,015,946	9,054,887	23,070,833
Waterford City	5,616,691	5,145,734	10,762,425
Waterford County	8,136,740	9,645,972	17,782,712
Westmeath	13,412,616	8,466,792	21,879,408
Wexford	22,401,794	19,038,769	41,440,563
Wicklow	14,941,205	22,094,772	37,035,977
Total	531,293,170	605,798,031	1,137,091,201

2012

Questions - Written Answers

Licensing Authority	MTO receipts(€)	Online receipts (€)	Total(€)
Carlow	9,321,370	5,551,958	14,873,328
Cavan	9,786,016	6,495,672	16,281,688
Clare	15,976,442	12,538,906	28,515,348
Cork	58,902,357	70,304,145	129,206,502
Donegal	24,643,832	10,362,036	35,005,868
Dublin City	94,588,061	172,147,010	266,735,071
Galway	31,565,215	25,663,754	57,228,969
Kerry	17,492,776	18,003,985	35,496,761
Kildare	19,682,964	30,437,041	50,120,005
Kilkenny	13,084,078	10,108,089	23,192,167
Laois	10,772,229	6,226,364	16,998,593
Leitrim	4,707,170	2,650,664	7,357,834
Limerick City	6,093,939	4,481,869	10,575,808
Limerick County	19,674,471	15,179,399	34,853,870
Longford	6,194,931	2,713,614	8,908,545
Louth	14,419,506	9,668,068	24,087,574
Mayo	18,847,505	11,778,604	30,626,109
Meath	18,861,339	24,638,321	43,499,660
Monaghan	10,781,180	4,268,345	15,049,525
Offaly	10,264,885	6,652,083	16,916,968
Roscommon	10,016,423	5,155,779	15,172,202
Sligo	9,662,563	5,349,127	15,011,690
Tipperary North	9,622,944	8,972,760	18,595,704
Tipperary South	13,854,111	7,607,220	21,461,331
Waterford City	5,543,859	4,556,362	10,100,221
Waterford County	8,377,348	8,232,739	16,610,087
Westmeath	13,080,914	7,233,685	20,314,599
Wexford	20,624,094	16,756,751	37,380,845
Wicklow	14,928,307	19,596,571	34,524,878
Total	521,370,829	533,330,921	1,054,701,750

2011

Licensing Authority	MTO receipts (€)	Online receipts (€)	Total (€)
Carlow	9,569,544	4,838,304	14,407,848
Cavan	10,154,514	5,651,054	15,805,568
Clare	16,979,957	10,185,581	27,165,538
Cork	61,516,738	60,358,411	121,875,149
Donegal	25,291,047	8,936,217	34,227,264
Dublin City	101,599,227	152,515,288	254,114,515
Galway	32,489,805	22,329,199	54,819,004
Kerry	18,160,310	15,597,319	33,757,629
Kildare	20,555,909	27,245,803	47,801,712
Kilkenny	13,289,838	8,854,321	22,144,159
Laois	10,877,515	5,572,878	16,450,393

Licensing Authority	MTO receipts (€)	Online receipts (€)	Total (€)
Leitrim	4,859,321	2,357,358	7,216,679
Limerick City	6,561,285	4,034,669	10,595,954
Limerick County	19,573,382	13,251,538	32,824,920
Longford	6,286,391	2,245,881	8,532,272
Louth	14,776,746	8,535,329	23,312,075
Mayo	19,387,280	10,273,641	29,660,921
Meath	19,952,795	22,101,034	42,053,829
Monaghan	11,070,078	3,696,921	14,766,999
Offaly	10,279,514	5,891,215	16,170,729
Roscommon	10,177,855	4,489,006	14,666,861
Sligo	9,957,281	4,672,764	14,630,045
North Tipperary	10,315,150	7,658,749	17,973,899
South Tipperary	14,622,522	6,299,174	20,921,696
Waterford City	5,537,332	4,048,012	9,585,344
Waterford County	8,970,359	6,868,433	15,838,792
Westmeath	13,182,014	6,431,067	19,613,081
Wexford	21,648,233	14,512,142	36,160,375
Wicklow	16,582,815	16,743,100	33,325,915
Total	544,224,756	466,194,408	1,010,419,164

Local Government Fund

723. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the income components and the anticipated income to the Local Government Fund in 2018; the expected expenditure items and total expenditure in 2018 following the enactment of the Water Services Act 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50360/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): As provided for in the Water Services Act 2017, from 2018 onward all State funding to Irish Water will be channelled through my Department's Vote. In order to facilitate the change in funding sources the provisions of the Act facilitate the payment of motor tax receipts into the Exchequer, rather than the Local Government Fund (LGF), and the direct payment of local property tax receipts into the LGF.

The distribution of the 2018 allocations across my Department's Vote, including the income and expenditure components for the LGF, will be determined through the 2018 Revised Estimates Volume (REV) process. It is expected that the 2018 REV will be finalised and published by my colleague, the Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform, in December.

Departmental Contracts Data

724. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the public contracts between his Department and companies (details supplied) in each of the years 2011 to 2016; the value of each contract; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50404/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): My

Department had one contract in place with the companies specified during the period 2011 to 2016, detailed in the table below. This contract was for the provision of expert assistance in the Local Government Shared Services Programme.

Name of Company	Contract Award Date	Value of Contract (€)
Deloitte	02/08/2013	157,778.25

Ministerial Advisers Data

725. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the names of the special advisers employed in his Department; the names of special advisers to junior ministers or Ministers of State in his Department; and the annual gross salary of each adviser. [50441/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Two Special Advisers, Mr. Jack O'Donnell and Ms. Jennifer Carroll MacNeill, are employed in my Department. Both are paid by my Department on the Principal Officer (Standard) PPC pay scale (€81,767 - €100,333). There are no Special Advisers employed in respect of the Ministers of State in my Department.

Social and Affordable Housing

726. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government his plans to include a summary at the start of all future social housing construction status reports from quarter 3, Q3, 2017 providing the number of units that have secured planning permission, that have commenced, that have completed and that have been tenanted since the previous quarters reports. [50495/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): In publishing quarterly Social Housing Construction Status Reports, my Department already provides information in relation to the social housing projects and the number of new social homes that have commenced on site and have been completed, as well as information on the projects at the various stages of advancement. The most recent report, in relation to Quarter 2 2017, is available at the following link: www.housing.gov.ie/housing/rebuilding-ireland/minister-murphy-publishes-details-further-progress-social-housing-schemes.

My Department does not have a direct role in either the planning process or the final tenanting of social homes, so I do not propose to collect statistics on these areas. The information on social housing projects at the various stages of advancement that is published includes those that are at 'Stage 2' or 'pre-planning'. Projects beyond that stage will have secured planning approval. In terms of tenanting, this is a matter for individual local authorities and Approved Housing Bodies and I would expect units to be tenanted without delay.

Social and Affordable Housing Funding

727. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if his Department or local authorities have discretion to offer private developers more than a 10% deposit in advance of the purchase of turnkey developments for social housing; if deposits of above 10% have ever been sanctioned by his Department to facilitate the progress of such turnkey developments; and if he has given consideration to allowing the use of such

discretion with respect to a specific development in a location (details supplied) in County Kerry. [50520/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): In respect of a small number of turnkey projects an approach has been progressed whereby land was provided as security against the provision of a deposit above the usual level. The availability of this approach to Kerry County Council will be considered in circumstances where it is feasible and recommended by the local authority.

School Services Staff

728. **Deputy Pat Buckley** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if his attention has been drawn to the delay in appointing a traffic warden for a school (details supplied) despite the position being approved in June 2017. [50525/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Under section 159 of the Local Government Act 2001, it is the Chief Executive of the Council who is responsible for staffing and organisational arrangements necessary for carrying out the functions of the local authority.

My Department received a staff sanction request from Cork County Council for a School Warden, Mitchelstown, on a part-time, permanent basis and following consideration of the request, the post was approved.

Commencement of Legislation

729. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if all sections of the Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015 have been commenced; if not when remaining sections will be commenced; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50627/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Damien English): All sections of the Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015 have been commenced, apart from section 34 which amends section 96 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, in relation to rental accommodation availability agreements.

The commencement of section 34 is linked to Chapter 4 of Part 2 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009, relating to rental accommodation arrangements, which has not been commenced to date because its commencement requires that section 31 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009, as amended, is commenced.

While section 31 of the 2009 Act, which provides for the introduction of a national framework for social housing rents, has not been commenced, considerable work has been carried out by my Department in developing a draft framework for a harmonisation of the approach to be taken by local authorities in regard to various aspects of rent schemes. These proposals were examined further in the light of the broader commitment given in the Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness to review the disparate systems of differential rents for social housing in place across local authorities. I expect that the review will be completed shortly.

730. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Tithíochta, Pleanála agus Rialtais Áitiúil cén líon iomlán foirne atá fostaithe ina Roinn faoi láthair; cé mhéid post atá daingnithe nó aitheanta ag an Roinn (i scéim teanga, nó ar aon bhealach eile) mar phoist a bhfuil riachtanas Gaeilge ag baint leo; cé mhéid duine atá ann ag a bhfuil líofacht i nGaeilge agus atá ag feidhmiú sna poist sin atá daingnithe nó aitheanta mar phoist a bhfuil riachtanas Gaeilge ag baint leo; an bhfuil sé beartaithe ag an tráth seo aon phost eile de chuid na Roinne a aithint mar phoist a bhfuil riachtanas Gaeilge [50685/17]

731. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Tithíochta, Pleanála agus Rialtais Áitiúil cé mhéid folúntas a líonadh ina Roinn ó thús na bliana seo; cé mhéid de na folúntais sin a bhain le poist a bhí sainaitheanta mar phoist a raibh Gaeilge riachtanach ina leith; cé mhéid folúntas atá le líonadh faoi láthair agus cé mhéid de na folúntais siúd atá sainaitheanta mar fholúntais a bhfuil riachtanas Gaeilge ag baint leo. [50702/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I propose to take Questions Nos. 730 and 731 together.

Tá 651 fostaithe i mo Roinn ar bhonn coibhéiseach lánaimseartha, agus níl éinne acu i bpost atá ainmnithe le riachtanas Gaeilge faoi leith. Tá 57 ball foirne nua earcaithe in iomláine trasna na grádanna éagsúla i mbliana.

Mar chuid dá Phleanáil d'Fhórsa Saothair, rinne mo Roinn imscrúdú ar líon na bpost ina bhfuil inniúlacht faoi leith sa Ghaeilge ag teastáil. Fuarthas nach bhfuil poist den chineál sin sa Roinn, ag an am seo, agus dá bhrí sin níl aon phoist faoi leith ainmnithe le riachtanas dátheangach. Tá é seo tugtha le fios don Roinn Caiteachais Phoiblí agus Athchóirithe. Mar chuid de phleanáil leanúnach d'fhórsa saothair, déantar monatóireacht agus athbhreithniú ar an gcás ar bhonn rialta.

Tá roinnt d'fhoireann na Roinne faoi láthair áfach atá inniúil ar a chuid nó a cuid oibre a dhéanamh trí mheán na Gaeilge agus is féidir na baill seo a dhíriú chuig réimsí oibre faoi leith ina bhfuil gá le Gaeilge agus / nó Béarla nuair is gá. Leanfaidh mo Roinn ag soláthar deiseanna do bhaill foirne a gcuid scileanna Gaeilge a fheabhsú trí oiliúint teanga ag leibhéal éagsúla a chur ar fail.

Defence Forces Remuneration

732. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if his Department is reviewing the pay structure of members of the Permanent Defence Force (details supplied); if he will address the matter in order to ensure Defence Forces members are appropriately remunerated for their roles; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50280/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): Rates of remuneration and conditions of employment in the Irish public sector have traditionally been set by reference to relative levels of pay across the various sectors of the Irish public sector. Like other areas within the Public Service, the pay of the Permanent Defence Force was reduced during the financial crisis. The Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest Acts of 2009-2015 (FEMPI) and the Public Service Stability Agreement 2013-2018 (Lansdowne Road Agreement) define current pay policy. PDFORRA signed up to the Lansdowne Road Agreement in March 2017. The finalisation of negotiations under the agreement allowed for the commencement of the process for the implementation of pay increases and arrears, which have now been applied to the Permanent Defence Force. An increase of 2.5% from 1 January 2016, for annualised salaries up to €24,000 and 1% for annualised salaries between €24,001 and €31,000

was included in the weekly payroll of 5 July 2017. An increase of €1,000 from 1 April 2017 on annualised salaries up to €65,000 per annum was paid on 19 July 2017.

The pay of general service recruits and privates who joined the Permanent Defence Force post 1 January 2013 has been increased further following an agreement, facilitated by the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC), between the Department of Defence, Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and PDFORRA. These improved payscales, have been backdated to 1 July 2016. The payments were made to relevant personnel on 30 August 2017.

Going forward, there is the potential for further increases arising from the recent negotiations on the extension to the Lansdowne Road Agreement. The Public Service Stability Agreement 2018-2020 contains proposals for:

- a 7.25% increase over the period of the agreement for those earning less than €30,000 per annum
- a 6.75% increase over the period of the agreement for those earning between €30,001 and €32,000 per annum, and
- a 5.75% increase over the period of the agreement for those earning over €32,000 per annum.

The Government recognises the contribution made by all public servants, including members of the Permanent Defence Force, during the economic crisis, to restoring our public finances and getting the country back on track. In making these improvements, the Government is ensuring that the increases are weighted in favour of those on lower pay.

Under the provisions of the Public Service Pay and Pensions Bill 2017, which is currently before the Oireachtas, it is anticipated that, between 2018 and 2020, the pay of all public servants (including members of the Defence Forces) earning under €70,000 will be restored to pre FEMPI levels.

The proposals have been presented to the Permanent Defence Force Representative Associations who participated in the negotiation process. They are subject to ballot by members of the Associations.

Future remuneration of Defence Forces personnel will continue to be dealt with within this collective process.

The Public Service Pay and Pensions Bill 2017 which provides for restoration of pay also provides for the restoration of the 5% reduction in allowances under FEMPI. The restoration of Defence Force Allowances which were reduced under the Haddington Road Agreement are currently the subject of separate negotiations under the Conciliation & Arbitration Scheme.

In relation to contracts for enlisted personnel, I have directed civil and military management to initiate a broad view and to bring forward recommendations for my consideration.

Commemorative Medals

733. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if the first and second infantry group that completed overseas service in the Democratic Republic of Congo will be awarded medals for their service; and if Defence Forces members that served in Cyprus will be acknowledged. [49887/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): In general terms, medals are currently awarded to members of the Defence Forces on the basis of various criteria such as their length of service, for service overseas and for acts of bravery associated with such service both at home and overseas. Members who serve overseas on UN missions or UN mandated missions, subject to certain criteria, are currently eligible for the award of An Bonn Chosantóirí Síochána na Náisiún Aontaithe (United Nations Peacekeepers Medal). This medal is only awarded once to any individual, irrespective of the number of overseas missions that they complete during their career.

In addition to this medal, a member who serves overseas may also be eligible for the award of a mission-specific medal by the mission organisers.

The military authorities inform me that all Defence Forces personnel who were deployed on the overseas missions referred to by the Deputy received the appropriate mission-specific awards provided that they met the criteria laid down by the United Nations for each of the missions referred to and reflected in Defence Forces Regulations. The qualifying service period was 90 days in the mission area.

I am advised by the military authorities that any personnel who met the eligibility criteria and were not awarded the mission medal should contact the Defence Forces Ceremonial Branch.

It should be noted that last June I and the former Taoiseach, Enda Kenny TD, decided to award a medal to the men of “A” Company, 35th Infantry Battalion and, in the case of those members who are deceased, to their next of kin, to give full and due recognition in honour of the courageous actions of the men during the siege at Jadotville in September 1961. This was an exceptional measure that recognises their bravery and courage during the unique circumstances of that siege. This was an initiative I had been working on for some time and I was privileged to be able to take the decision to award a medal to the men of “A” Company.

Air Corps Equipment

734. **Deputy Alan Farrell** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the details of the aircraft fleet replacement programme for the Air Corps; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [49904/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): My priority as Minister with Responsibility for Defence is to ensure that the operational capability of the Army, Air Corps and Naval Service is maintained to the greatest extent possible so as to enable the Defence Forces to carry out their roles as assigned by Government as set out on the White Paper on Defence. Equipment priorities for the Army, Naval Service and Air Corps are being considered in the context of the lifetime of the White Paper on Defence as part of the capability development and equipment planning process. In this context the principal aim over the period of the White Paper will be to replace and upgrade, as required, existing capabilities in order to retain a flexible response for a wide range of operational requirements both at home and overseas. The White Paper on Defence provides that the Air Corps will see the Cessna fleet replaced with three larger aircraft suitably equipped for Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition and Reconnaissance tasks. The tender competition for the procurement of the three new aircraft is under way and the cost will be determined by the outcome of the tender competition which is expected to conclude shortly. The two Air Corps CASA 235 Maritime Patrol Aircraft are due for replacement in 2019. The White Paper also provides for the replacement of the CASA 235s with consideration to be given to their replacement with larger more capable

aircraft which would enhance maritime surveillance and provide a greater degree of utility for transport and cargo carrying tasks. Also, a decision was made in 2016 to replace a PC-9M aircraft and this aircraft was delivered from Pilatus Aircraft in Switzerland this July at a cost of €5 m exclusive of VAT. The new aircraft brings the fleet up to 8 and will assist in a required increase in pilot training in the Air Corps.

Appointments to State Boards Data

735. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the number of vacancies in each State board under the aegis of his Department, in tabular form. [49933/17]

736. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the names of persons he has appointed to each State board under the aegis of his department that have not come from the Public Appointments Service list of suitable candidates, in tabular form. [49995/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 735 and 736 together.

The only State body currently under the aegis of the Department of Defence is the Army Pensions Board. The Army Pensions Board is an independent statutory body established under the Army Pensions Act 1927. The Act specifies that the Board shall consist of a chairman and two ordinary members. The two ordinary members must be qualified medical practitioners of whom one must be an officer of the Army Medical Corps. The chairman and the non-military ordinary member are appointed by the Minister for Defence with the concurrence of the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform. The Army Medical Corps ordinary member is appointed by the Minister for Defence on the recommendation of the Chief of Staff of the Defence Forces.

The most recent appointment to the Army Pensions Board was Commandant Zdenek Osecky as an ordinary member with effect from 24th June 2016. Commandant Osecky was appointed on the recommendation of the Chief of Staff to fill the ordinary member position which must be filled by a serving officer of the Army Medical Corps.

No vacancies currently exist on the Army Pensions Board.

Ministerial Communications

737. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if he has used a private email account to send or receive official documents or positions on Brexit; and if so, the details of this correspondence. [50056/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): I did not use a private email account to send or receive official documents or positions on Brexit.

Departmental Bodies Data

738. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the bodies under the aegis his Department in which his Department provides in excess of €1 million funding per

annum to these bodies; the public funding received by these bodies; the bodies in which 50% or more of its income comes from public sources; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50112/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): There are no bodies under the aegis of my Department that receive funding in excess of €1 m.

Ministerial Meetings

739. **Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence his plans to meet the UK Defence Secretary and US Secretary for Defence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50318/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): Formal and informal meetings of Ministers at EU level provide a significant opportunity to engage bilaterally with Ministers from other member States, including the UK, on issues of concern to Ireland, both within the scope of the Ministry but also more broadly. In terms of formal bilateral meetings, I have previously met with The Rt Hon Sir Michael Fallon, MP the then Secretary of State at the UK Ministry of Defence. Our discussion covered a wide range of topics mainly in the security and defence domain but also focused on Brexit and the implications for Ireland and the EU. Last month, I met with The Rt Hon Earl Howe, Minister of State for Defence where again our main focus was in relation to Brexit.

At this time, there are no arrangements in place for meetings with the current UK Defence Secretary, The Rt Hon Gavin Williamson MP, or the US Secretary for Defence, Mr. James Mattis.

Emergency Planning

740. **Deputy Michael Harty** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if the Army is satisfied that it has the resources to offer meaningful support to individual families and communities in the event of dangerous flooding this winter and spring; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50334/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): At National level, representation on the Government Task Force on Emergency Planning, by both the Department of Defence and the Defence Forces, ensures the fullest co-ordination and co-operation in the event of an emergency. In accordance with the Framework for Major Emergency Management, primary responsibility for responding to emergencies caused by severe weather events, such as storms and flooding, rests with the three designated principal response agencies, namely, the relevant Local Authority, An Garda Síochána, and the Health Service Executive. The Defence Forces provide the fullest possible assistance to the appropriate agencies in the event of a natural disaster or emergency situation in its Aid to the Civil Authority role.

Major Emergency Plans have been developed by local and regional authorities and these Plans identify the procedures for requesting assistance from the Defence Forces.

The Defence Forces retains a wide range of specialist skills which can be deployed in such circumstances. The full spectrum of Defence Forces personnel and equipment are available for deployment in response to any emergencies that may arise.

I am satisfied that the assistance provided by the Defence Forces is provided in a co-ordinat-

ed way and that the tried and tested arrangements work well in response to emergencies.

Defence Forces Remuneration

741. **Deputy Michael Harty** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the progress that has been made on ameliorating low pay and conditions experienced by Defence Forces personnel (details supplied) outlined in a University of Limerick report in last July 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50335/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The rates of remuneration and conditions of employment in the Defence Forces are set by reference to relative levels of pay across the various parts of the public sector. Like other areas of the Public Service, the pay of the Permanent Defence Force was reduced during the financial crisis. The Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest Acts of 2009-2015 (FEMPI) and the Public Service Stability Agreement 2013-2018 (the Lansdowne Road Agreement) define current pay policy for Public Servants and members of the Permanent Defence Force.

It should be noted that the remarks relating to levels of pay contained within the focus group report compiled by the University of Limerick, predate a number of measures which have been taken this year to increase the pay of Permanent Defence Force personnel. The focus of these measures have been on the lower paid.

PDFORRA signed up to the Lansdowne Road Agreement (LRA) agreement in March 2017. The finalisation of negotiations under the agreement allowed for the commencement of the process for the implementation of pay increases and arrears, which have now been applied to the Permanent Defence Force. An increase of 2.5% from 1 January 2016 for annualised salaries up to €24,000 and 1% for annualised salaries between €24,001 and €31,000 was included in the weekly payroll of 5 July 2017. An increase of €1,000 from 1 April 2017 on annualised salaries up to €65,000 per annum was paid on 19 July 2017.

The pay of general service recruits and privates who joined the Permanent Defence Force post 1 January 2013 has been increased further following an agreement, facilitated by the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC), between the Department of Defence, Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and PDFORRA. These improved payscales have been backdated to 1 July 2016. The payments were made to relevant personnel on 30 August 2017.

Going forward, there is the potential for further increases for public servants, including members of the Permanent Defence Force, arising from the recent negotiations on the extension to the Lansdowne Road Agreement. The Public Service Stability Agreement 2018-2020 contains proposals for:

- a 7.25% increase over the period of the agreement for those earning less than €30,000 per annum

- a 6.75% increase over the period of the agreement for those earning between €30,001 and €32,000 per annum, and

- a 5.75% increase over the period of the agreement for those earning over €32,000 per annum.

The Government recognises the contribution made by all public servants, including members of the Permanent Defence Force, during the economic crisis, to restoring our public finances and getting the country back on track. In making these improvements the Government

is ensuring that the increases are weighted in favour of those on lower pay.

Under the provisions of the Public Service Pay and Pensions Bill 2017, which is currently before the Oireachtas, it is anticipated that, between 2018 and 2020, the pay of public servants, including members of the Defence Forces, earning under €70,000 will be restored to pre-FEM-PI levels.

The proposals have been presented to the Permanent Defence Force representative associations who participated in the negotiation process. They are subject to ballot by members of the associations.

Future remuneration of Defence Forces personnel will continue to be dealt with within this collective process.

Defence Forces Personnel Data

742. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the number of civilian positions which have become vacant in the year 2017 to date at Custume Barracks, Athlone; if these positions will be filled; if so, the timeframe for same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50352/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): Two civilian posts have become vacant at Custume Barracks, Athlone to date in 2017. Following the lifting of the embargo on recruitment to the Public Service, the military authorities have been identifying posts to be filled at various locations throughout the country on a prioritised basis. Competitions to fill posts identified by the military authorities are initiated following assessment of the business requirement for the posts. Posts in Custume Barracks, Athlone, as is the case with posts at other military installations, are currently the subject of this ongoing assessment process.

Departmental Contracts Data

743. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the public contracts between his Department and companies (details supplied) in each of the years 2011 to 2016; the value of each contract; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50398/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): I can confirm that my Department placed a contract with the second of the three named companies in 2013 in the amount of €1,987.36.

Foireann Roinne

744. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Taoisigh agus Aire Cosanta cén líon iomlán foirne atá fostaithe ina Roinn faoi láthair; cé mhéid post atá daingnithe nó aitheanta ag an Roinn (i scéim teanga, nó ar aon bhealach eile) mar phoist a bhfuil riachtanas Gaeilge ag baint leo; cé mhéid duine atá ann ag a bhfuil líofacht i nGaeilge agus atá ag feidhmiú sna poist sin atá daingnithe nó aitheanta mar phoist a bhfuil riachtanas Gaeilge ag baint leo; an bhfuil sé beartaithe ag an tráth seo aon phost eile de chuid na Roinne a aithint mar phoist a bhfuil riachtanas Gaeilge [50679/17]

745. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Taoisigh agus Aire Cosanta cé mhéid folún-

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tas a líonadh ina Roinn ó thús na bliana seo; cé mhéid de na folúntais sin a bhain le poist a bhí sainaitheanta mar phoist a raibh Gaeilge riachtanach ina leith; cé mhéid folúntas atá le líonadh faoi láthair agus cé mhéid de na folúntais siúd atá sainaitheanta mar fholúntais a bhfuil riachtanas Gaeilge ag baint leo. [50696/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 744 and 745 together.

Bhí 348 ball foirne i mo Roinn an 31 Deireadh Fómhair 2017. 33 an líon iomlán folúntas atá líonta i mo Roinn go dtí seo in 2017. 7 bhfolúntas ar fad atá fós le líonadh.

Níl aon phost laistigh de mo Roinn atá aitheanta mar phost a bhfuil riachtanas Gaeilge ag baint leis agus níl sé beartaithe aon phost a aithint sa Roinn mar phost a bhfuil riachtanas Gaeilge ag baint leis. Is beag caidreamh a bhíonn ag an Roinn leis an bpobal agus mar sin is beag éileamh atá ar sheirbhísí trí mheán na Gaeilge. Mar a fhoráiltear i Scéim Gaeilge reatha agus roimhe seo na Roinne, baineann an Roinn úsáid as grúpa pearsanra a cuireadh le chéile ar bhonn deonach chun cabhrú le Brainsí na Roinne seirbhísí a chur ar fáil trí mheán na Gaeilge agus chun idirghníomhú le custaiméirí más gá. Déantar athbhreithniú leanúnach ar an ngrúpa deonach seo.