

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 14, inclusive, answered orally.

Question No. 15 resubmitted.

National Economic and Social Council

16. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Taoiseach if will report on his interactions to date with the National Economic and Social Council, NESC; if he will further report on his plans for changes to the NESC; and his plans for the organisation's new priorities or instructions. [49174/17]

The Taoiseach: A new National Economic and Social Council (NESC) was appointed in May. The Council has changed the way it works with fewer plenary meetings, greater use of working or project groups, and more structured engagements with key policy actors, interests, and commentators.

The NESC has played an important role over many decades in developing shared understanding between Government and other stakeholders on economic and social policy and, more recently, sustainable development.

Over the coming years, Ireland faces into a period of significant change both at home and abroad which will present some new and exceptional challenges. The Programme for Partnership Government specifically notes that there are policy challenges where long term thinking is required.

I expect the Council to continue to contribute to policy development, with a focus on the strategic and longer term view.

The Council published its most recent report on 25 October – “Moving Towards the Circular Economy in Ireland”.

The Council has also approved a work programme up to 2019 comprising three themes:

Work on each of these themes is progressing and will be reviewed at the forthcoming Council meetings.

As is normal practice, I will submit the Council's reports to Government for information before they are published.

Questions Nos. 17 and 18 resubmitted.

Departmental Strategy Statements

19. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Taoiseach the position regarding his Department's strategy statement commitment on rural development. [49420/17]

The Taoiseach: My Department is committed to delivering sustainable economic development including regional and rural development.

Responsibility for Rural Affairs policy rests with the Minister for Community and Rural Development. Realising our Rural Potential, the Government's Action Plan for Rural Development, was launched in January 2017. It provides an overarching structure for the co-ordination and implementation of initiatives right across Government which will benefit rural Ireland.

As this is a priority issue for the Government, my Department is supporting implementation of the Action Plan through Cabinet Committee A.

Questions Nos. 20 to 29, inclusive, resubmitted.

Questions Nos. 30 to 34, inclusive, answered orally.

Community Employment Schemes Administration

35. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the amount spent in each county for community employment; and the procedures in place for schemes that require extra funding or seek extra places. [50575/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Community Employment (CE) schemes are typically sponsored by groups (known as CE Sponsors) wishing to benefit the local community. Such schemes provide a valuable service to local communities, while at the same time, providing training and educational opportunities to job seekers. The total expenditure for CE in 2016 was just over €361 million. A breakdown of this CE expenditure, for each county, is set out in the table attached. At the end of September, there were just over 21,000 participants on the Programme and over 1,300 supervisors. The annual budget provided to CE schemes includes an amount to cover the cost of training, materials, participant and supervisor wages, which are necessary for the effective operation of the scheme. The materials grant is available towards the cost of all materials necessary for the effective operation of the project such as insurance, audit fees and protective clothing. All scheme expenditure is approved by my Department, at Divisional level, in line with the contract agreement.

While my Department is not in a position to allocate additional places or monies to the overall budget in 2017, if there is a scheme that has an identified need for additional places or is experiencing financial difficulties, the sponsor should contact their local DEASP Division and the matter will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

The overall number of employment scheme places available in 2017 is 32,000. CE continues to be the largest programme in 2017 with 22,400 places available in over 950 schemes across the country. The balance is made up of placements in schemes such as the Rural Social Scheme and Tús.

The Government is very conscious of the role CE schemes play to support the delivery of vital services in local communities.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Community Employment Expenditure by County in 2016

County	Wages	Supervision	Training	Materials	Totals
CARLOW	5,892,198	987,213	162,975	315,363	7,357,749
CAVAN	4,628,106	760,583	120,428	211,348	5,720,464
CLARE	6,751,468	1,393,042	126,352	356,484	8,627,346
CORK	25,575,102	4,588,449	570,816	1,372,011	32,106,378
DONEGAL	13,775,665	2,469,327	292,956	687,693	17,225,642
DUBLIN	66,174,906	14,601,494	1,070,408	2,475,360	84,322,169
GALWAY	18,190,160	3,636,502	322,442	887,631	23,036,736
KERRY	12,488,621	2,128,569	186,009	708,588	15,511,787
KILDARE	9,974,386	1,689,451	324,739	500,815	12,489,391
KILKENNY	5,660,880	909,030	106,265	285,090	6,961,265
LAOIS	4,188,801	695,407	60,004	202,391	5,146,602
LEITRIM	1,579,201	310,894	48,291	79,506	2,017,893
LIMERICK	16,039,202	2,995,706	258,629	782,244	20,075,780
LONGFORD	5,196,767	921,401	137,511	260,546	6,516,226
LOUTH	9,609,997	1,543,068	228,552	483,318	11,864,935
MAYO	9,201,648	1,828,943	163,648	472,072	11,666,311
MEATH	5,688,388	1,005,089	149,449	284,155	7,127,081
MONAGHAN	4,240,865	599,613	112,596	196,106	5,149,181
OFFALY	5,077,853	878,142	141,937	250,460	6,348,393
ROSCOMMON	4,193,349	838,192	95,760	196,681	5,323,983
SLIGO	5,989,938	1,150,102	149,932	322,144	7,612,117
TIPPERARY	9,657,083	2,169,773	147,550	519,340	12,493,746
WATERFORD	11,688,276	2,144,048	242,688	588,715	14,663,728
WESTMEATH	6,610,318	1,135,842	173,487	365,683	8,285,330
WEXFORD	13,293,621	2,469,110	301,142	728,118	16,791,992
WICKLOW	5,681,601	1,021,734	154,667	286,676	7,144,678
Grand Total	287,048,401	54,870,726	5,849,234	13,818,540	361,586,901

Questions Nos. 36 to 39, inclusive, answered orally.

State Pension (Contributory)

40. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection her plans to implement changes to the State pension in order to rectify pension inequality faced by women. [50591/17]

44. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the timeframe for addressing the inequitable system of contribution averaging; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50593/17]

45. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection her plans to re-examine the situation whereby women that were in the workforce and left in earlier years for family duties are not in a position to receive the full State contributory pension when they reach retirement age; and her further plans to address this situation. [50545/17]

48. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Pro-

tection the status of work of her Department in reviewing the position of those affected by the 2012 changes to the eligibility bands for the contributory old age pension; when she expects her report to be finalised. [50578/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I propose to take Questions Nos. 40, 44, 45 and 48 together.

The current rate bands applying to the State pension contributory 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 had additional means and lesser PRSI contribution records were reduced.

The 2012 rate bands more closely reflect the social insurance contributions history of a person than those in place between 2000 and 2012. The current rate bands still provide pensions to people which are not proportionate with their level of contribution. A person with only 20 years of contributions over nearly 50 years will still get an 85% pension.

It is estimated that, to revert to the previous bands from January 2018, this 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 each following year.

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 particularly affected by anomalies under the yearly average system, particularly those with homemaking periods prior to the introduction of the Homemakers scheme, I will bring these options to the relevant Cabinet Committee before bringing any final proposals to Cabinet.

Any change would, if of any substance, have a significant cost, and the resources would have to come from somewhere. It is unlikely this could be done before Budget 2019, and this would reduce the funds available to increase rates of payment in that Budget for everyone, including widows and non-contributory pensioners, neither of whom would gain from any such measure.

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 Deputies.

Questions Nos. 41 to 43, inclusive, answered orally.

Questions No. 44 and 45 answered with Question No. 40.

Data Protection

46. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if she has satisfied herself that the public service identity data her Department as data controller provides to the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, as data processor, is processed with appropriate security and data protection safeguards. [50588/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Single Customer View (SCV) was developed to enable sharing of Public Service Identity data (called PSI) in accordance with Sections 262 (5) and 262 (6) of the Social Welfare Consolidation Act 2005. In addition, the system facilitates the sharing of this PSI data for control purposes in accordance with Section 261 of the Social Welfare Consolidation Act 2005. Only bodies specified in legislation are legally entitled to access the Single Customer View and only the limited set of PSI data is stored in the system. The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform maintains and operates the Single Customer View on behalf of my Department. The Secretary General of my Department is the Data Controller. All Single Customer View data is stored in a secure Government-owned and operated datacentre in Dublin. This data is maintained on secure storage in databases with well-defined and monitored access controls in place. Access to the limited personal identity data on the Single Customer View is subject to the formal approval of my Department. That approval is conditional on a business need being established and on the agreement to and implementation of rigorous data security and protection protocols and standards (both technical and business).

All accesses to the Single Customer View system are logged. Information is logged about what information was accessed, by whom, and when. The Office of the Government Chief Information Officer in the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, the Client Identity Services Division of my Department and the user organisations management hierarchy can access all relevant access history on the Single Customer View to ensure that all accesses are appropriate.

My Department has published a “Comprehensive Guide to SAFE Registration and the Public Services Card” on its website which also addresses matters relating to the Single Customer View, security and data protection.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Rent Supplement Scheme Eligibility

47. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if she will ensure that officers have due cognisance for the housing situation of persons on certain payments, who may be advised through Intreo to seek employment, which might be low wage employment but could put the person outside the qualification for rent support, which in today’s inflated market would effectively render them homeless; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50547/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The objective of the activation process is to provide a professional employment service to help unemployed jobseekers secure and sustain suitable employment and by so doing achieve financial self-sufficiency. This function is carried out by appropriately trained case officers in my Department who provide a personalised supportive collaborative service tailored to meet the individual circumstances of the Jobseeker. During the course of the engagement between the case officer and the jobseeker, all possible pro-employment incentives are explored and explained to the jobseeker and the advantages and benefits of suitable employment take up are promoted as an integral part of the activation interaction.

In terms of rent supplement, the Deputy will be aware that the strategic policy direction of my Department is to return this scheme to its original purpose of being a short-term income support with the introduction of the HAP scheme. A significant difference between the HAP scheme and rent supplement is that HAP has been designed to allow households with a long term housing need to secure full-time employment and continue to remain in the scheme. Officials in my Department continue to support the transfer of cases from long term rent supplement to HAP.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Question No. 48 answered with Question No. 40.

Question No. 49 answered with Question No. 42.

Question No. 50 answered orally.

State Pension (Contributory)

51. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection her plans to re-examine the situation for women that lost out on their full State contributory pension due to leaving the workforce to rear their children; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50546/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): There are two State pensions. Firstly, the State pension non-contributory is a means-tested pension funded from taxation. Secondly, the State pension contributory, which is not means-tested, is paid from the Social Insurance Fund. Accordingly, it is important to ensure those qualifying for that pension 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. The homemaker's scheme makes qualification for a higher rate of State pension contributory easier for those who take time out of the workforce for caring duties. The scheme, which was introduced in and took effect for periods from 1994, allows up to 20 years spent caring for children under 12 years of age, or caring for incapacitated people over that age, to be disregarded when a person's social insurance record is being averaged for pension purposes. This has the effect of increasing the yearly average of the pensioner, which is used to set the rate of his or her pension.

Backdating it in respect of periods before its introduction in 1994 is estimated to cost €290 million per year, and this figure would rise annually and at a faster rate than the overall cost of State pensions.

It is clear that this is a very substantial sum, which would not be affordable without very significant cut-backs in other areas. Therefore, a change where everyone affected by the 1994 cut-off point for the Homemakers scheme would receive a maximum rate pension, is not a feasible option at the present time.

Where someone does not qualify for a full rate contributory pension, they may qualify for an alternative payment. If their spouse has a contributory pension, they may qualify for an increase for a qualified adult, amounting up to 90% of a full rate pension. Alternatively, they may qualify for a means-tested State pension non-contributory, which amounts up to 95% of the maximum contributory rate.

I plan to introduce a total contributions approach to the calculation of the State Pension (Contributory) to replace the yearly average approach from around 2020. The position of homemakers will be carefully considered in the context of that reform.

Separately, I have committed in this House to ask my officials to carefully examine approaches that might assist some women in the situation you refer to, particularly if they were impacted upon by the rate-band changes in 2012. When they report to me, I will consider the options available, and bring the matter to cabinet committee for consideration and thereafter to Government for approval.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Foster Care Policy

52. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if she will review the position of foster parents that are in receipt of homemaker credits but can only qualify for this while foster children are under 12 years of age in view of the fact that their responsibilities continue after 12 years of age; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50592/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The home-makers scheme makes qualification for a higher rate of State pension (contributory) easier for those who take time out of the workforce for caring duties. The scheme, which was introduced in 1994, allows up to 20 years spent caring for children under 12 years of age (or caring for incapacitated people over that age) to be disregarded in the calculation of the yearly average contributions of the pensioner. This will generally have the effect of increasing the yearly average and may result in a higher rate of pension. Claims continue to be subject to the standard qualifying conditions for State pension contributory also being satisfied, including the requirement that 520 contributions be paid. Foster parents are entitled to the benefits of the homemakers scheme, on the same basis as other homemakers, and will qualify if the carer is in receipt of Child Benefit. If the foster parent is not in receipt of Child Benefit, they can still qualify for the home-makers scheme if the caring periods are confirmed by TUSLA - these are cases where caring is for a short period of time. The scheme is limited to the age of 12 (except where the child is incapacitated), and most children over that age will be in secondary school until mid-afternoon. This should facilitate both natural parents and foster parents returning to the workforce, either on a part-time basis, or by availing of a few hours after-school childcare each day.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

State Pension (Contributory)

53. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when the PRSI contribution bands changes made in budget 2012 for the pension will be changed back to the previous four bands; when refunds will be provided to the tens of thousands of pensioners that have been adversely affected; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50467/17]

66. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the way in which she plans to address the shortfall in pension payments for persons retiring since 2012 in view of the inequality between persons retiring pre and post 2012; and if she will

make a statement on the matter. [50505/17]

76. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when action will be taken to reverse the 2012 pension bands and rates changes which resulted in reduced State pension payments for over 42,000 persons; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50580/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I propose to take Questions Nos. 53, 66 and 76 together.

The current rate bands applying to the State pension contributory 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 person 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.

On the matter of differing criteria for people who retired before and after this change was made, this is the norm, both in Ireland and in other countries, when pension systems are reformed in a way to make them more sustainable. If it were not the case, either (a) existing pensioners would be subject to actual reductions in their incomes, in some cases several years after reaching pension age, or (b) no reforms which made savings could ever be made, as people would always be subject to the rules in place when older pensioners had reached pension age.

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.

My Department is examining in depth various options that would provide some relief to those who would have a higher contributory pension, had the ratebands 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 present the possible solution(s) to cabinet committee to consider how these might be financed and thereafter I will bring to Government for approval.

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 Deputies.

54. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if the Citizens Information Board has taken a final and official position on the cost benefit analysis report on the restructuring of MABS and CIS. [50573/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Citizens Information Board (CIB) is a statutory body established by the Oireachtas. In addition to its own statutory responsibilities in relation to information and advocacy service provision, it has statutory responsibility for the countrywide networks of Citizens Information Services (CIS) and the Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS). In February of this year, the Board of CIB decided to change its governance arrangements from ninety three individual service delivery companies to an eight region model. The new model will comprise sixteen regional companies, with one CIS and one MABS company in each region. Following a procurement exercise, the CIB Executive commissioned a Cost Benefit Analysis on the final model decided upon by the Board. The Cost Benefit Analysis, provided by independent economic consultants, was circulated to the Board of CIB for information in advance of its meeting on 20th September 2017. The report by its nature is an analytical report and, as such, is not dependent on approval or sign off by the Board.

Implementation by the CIB's Executive of the Board's February decision is underway. An Implementation Group, with cross - sectoral representation, has been set up to assist with the transition to the new governance model.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Exceptional Needs Payment Eligibility

55. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if the qualifying conditions for exceptional needs payments have changed; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50499/17]

67. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of applications made under the exceptional needs payments in 2016; the percentage of these applications awarded and declined, respectively; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50583/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I propose to take Questions Nos. 55 and 67 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 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. This position has not changed. The legislation does not confer a statutory right or entitlement to ENPs. The principle consideration in making a payment under the ENP scheme is to address a particular once-off and exceptional need which is not of an expected or recurring nature. Discretion is available to officers to issue a payment to assist an individual or household in any particular hardship situation which may arise.

While statistics are maintained relating to payments under the ENP scheme, they are not maintained on the number of applications or the outcome of those applications. Some 100,000

ENPs issued in 2016 at a total cost of €32.2 million. For reporting purposes this data also includes the numbers of urgent needs payments (UNP). A UNP is a once-off payment made to persons who would not normally qualify for SWA but who have an urgent need which they cannot meet from their own resources or an alternative is not available at that time.

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.

Family Income Supplement

56. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the rationale behind renaming family income supplement to the working family payment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50500/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Department’s approach to developing the working family payment was guided by two principles. First, that it should ensure that work pays, and second, that it should have a positive effect on reducing child poverty. To advance the commitment contained in the Programme for Partnership Government, the Department established an internal working group and an Inter-Departmental Group of the relevant Government Departments to consider proposals. The Department also issued a call for submissions from interested parties. As part of this process the Department carried out an extensive analysis of the range of supports it provides to assist individuals to take up employment. This analysis showed the existing in-work supports are very effective, and work well in assisting individuals make the transition from unemployment into employment. These findings are confirmed by the ESRI’s research into the Department’s existing in-work measures, and Eurostat figures, which show that the parental in-work poverty rate in Ireland is 5.8%, significantly below the EU 28 average of 11.2%.

This is in large part due to the Department’s in-work supports such as Family Income Supplement and the Back to Work Family Dividend.

The Department’s approach, my approach and that of my predecessor to the working family payment is guided by two principles: first, that we have to ensure that work pays and that it is worthwhile for people to go out to work, and, second, that it should have a positive impact on reducing child poverty in the country, which is still far too high. This is of particular importance to me.

It is not, for me, as simple as changing the name from Family Income Supplement to Working Family Payment. Under Section 8 I am proposing to put FIS under the umbrella of working family payments and I plan to bring forward a number of progressive supports for working families with a view to assisting those who are transitioning from unemployment into employment, and from under-employment into full employment.

In the context of Budget 2018 it was decided to re-designate the Family Income Supplement (FIS) scheme as the Working Family Payment (WFP), which will bring it more visibility as a payment aimed specifically at working families. The new name better reflects the nature of the payment and the Department would encourage families to look into seeing if they are eligible for the payment. It is also intended to continually review the package of supports offered to working parents to ensure that they continue to meet their objectives.

Question No. 57 answered with Question No. 43.

National Disability Strategy Implementation Plan

58. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the role her Department will play in the National Disability Inclusion Strategy 2017-21; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50314/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The National Disability Inclusion Strategy (NDIS) 2017 to 2021 was launched in July, 2017. It sets out to secure an Irish society in which people with disabilities enjoy equal rights and opportunities to participate in social and cultural life, can take up work if they want to, and have choice and control over how they live their lives.

The Strategy sets out 114 actions under a range of cross-cutting themes and objectives. These include ensuring that public services are accessible to all citizens; enabling people with disabilities to have an opportunity to work and have a career; providing people who acquire a disability with the supports that they need to remain in or return to work if they so choose, and; developing approaches to ensure people with disabilities are financially better-off in work. A number of these actions are also reflected in the Comprehensive Employment Strategy for people with disabilities and the Make Work Pay report, both of which seek to improve employment participation and outcomes for people with disabilities.

The NDIS adopts a cross-governmental approach in which Government departments and agencies collaborate with organisations in the disability sector to ensure that the lives of people with disabilities are improved in both a practical and real sense. The role of the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection is defined both in terms of delivering a number of specific, identified actions in the strategy, as well as being part of the wider cross-governmental implementation of the strategy. The Department is assigned direct responsibility for six actions, mainly reflecting its role in employment and income supports for persons with a disability as well as a number of other actions in common with other departments. The Department also participates in the National Disability Inclusion Strategy Steering Group (NDISSG) which monitors the implementation of the strategy and which includes the National Disability Authority, the Disability Stakeholders Group and key Government departments.

I hope this clarifies the issue for the Deputy.

State Pension (Non-Contributory)

59. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when she will bring a complete report to Cabinet on the pension anomaly introduced in 2012. [50316/17]

64. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when the report on the impact to the 2012 changes to the contributory pension will be published; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50502/17]

71. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when the report on the effect of 2012 changes to the calculation of pensions on women in particular will be published; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50587/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I propose to take Questions Nos. 59, 64 and 71 together.

Spending on State pensions has increased rapidly in recent decades. This year, the cost is €7.3 billion. This is estimated to increase by €1 billion every five years due to the increased number of pensioners. These projections mean that there are considerable sustainability and affordability challenges in the years ahead and we must continue to address them.

There are two State pensions. Firstly, the State pension non-contributory is a means-tested pension funded from taxation. Secondly, the State pension contributory, which is not means-tested, is paid from the Social Insurance Fund.

Accordingly, it is important to ensure that those qualifying for that pension have made a sustained contribution to the Social Insurance Fund over their working lives.

In 2012 rate bands were introduced which more closely reflect the social insurance contributions history of a person than those in place prior to then. It must be noted that people with only 20 years of contributions over nearly 50 years will still get an 85% contributory pension, or a non-contributory pension of up to 95% that of the maximum contributory rate, subject to their means.

Reverting to the pre-2012 bands would move additional resources to people who already have means, and it is estimated that it 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.

It is my intention to introduce a Total Contributions Approach to the calculation of the State Pension (Contributory) from 2020 onwards and I'll be bringing forward proposals in this regard in the near future.

In the meantime, I have asked my officials to carefully examine approaches that may help to address the issue in relation to the averaging approach as it affects people with a short work period early in their career followed by a long break. We need to ensure that any proposed approach does not cause further anomalies or disadvantages to arise. We also need to determine, as best we can, the cost of any such approach and how that can be financed in the future. When they report to me, I will consider the options available, and bring the matter to cabinet committee and thereafter to Government for approval.

I want to ensure that any approach taken is fair and sustainable in the long term.

I hope that this clarifies the matter for the Deputies.

Social Welfare Appeals Delays

60. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection her plans to address the significant time delays for the appeals process in relation to social protection payments which can take six months to be completed. [50504/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Significant efforts and resources have been devoted to reforming the appeal process in recent years. As a result, appeal processing times improved between 2011 and 2016 from 52.5 weeks for an oral hearing in 2011 to 24.1 weeks in 2016 and from 25.1 weeks for a summary decision in 2011 to 17.6 weeks in 2016. I understand from the Chief Appeals Officer that there has been a slight increase in processing times in 2017 with oral hearings taking, on average, 26 weeks and summary decisions taking 20 weeks to finalise. A number of factors have contributed to the increase including the retirement of six experienced Appeals Officers during the first half of 2017.

However, she is hopeful that processing times will improve as a number of newly appointed Officers gain experience in their roles. Specific actions taken to reduce processing times include: liaising with HR to ensure that vacancies are filled quickly; ensuring that training is given to new Appeals Officers as early as possible; working with the Department to reduce time in submitting appeal files; and a restructuring of the mechanism for recording appeal decisions.

It is open to an appellant to claim supplementary welfare allowance pending the outcome of their appeal if their means are insufficient to meet their needs.

The Chief Appeals Officer assures me that processing times are a priority. However, the drive for efficiency must be balanced with the competing demand to ensure that decisions are consistent and of high quality.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Appeal Processing Times by Scheme 01 January 2017- 31 October 2017

	Average processing times (weeks) Summary Decisions	Average processing times (weeks) Oral Hearings
Adoptive Benefit	13.4	-
Blind Person's Pension	20.4	24.4
Carers Allowance	21.3	23.7
Carers Benefit	16.3	21.2
Child Benefit	22.3	32.1
Disability Allowance	18.4	23.4
Illness Benefit	27.3	30.3
Partial Capacity Benefit	35.1	28.1
Domiciliary Care Allowance	26.0	32.6
Deserted Wives Benefit	13.1	15.7
Farm Assist	21.0	25.7
Bereavement Grant	15.1	-
Death Benefit (Pension)	102.10	-
Family Income Supplement	19.6	33.5
Invalidity Pension	16.1	23.8
Liabile Relatives	18.8	24.1
Maternity Benefit	18.8	19.4
Paternity Benefit	22.7	-
One Parent Family Payment	25.2	34.8
State Pension (Contributory)	30.7	46.9
State Pension (Non-Contributory)	25.3	34.1
State Pension (Transition)	81.1	-
Occupational Injury Benefit	19.5	26.4
Disablement Pension	24.9	28.8
Medical Care	-	27.3
Incapacity Supplement	54.2	37.2
Guardian's Payment (Con)	25.3	25.1
Guardian's Payment (Non-Con)	15.2	23.4
Jobseeker's Allowance (Means)	19.1	26.8

Questions - Written Answers

	Average processing times (weeks) Summary Decisions	Average processing times (weeks) Oral Hearings
Jobseeker's Allowance	17.4	24.7
BTW Family Dividend	19.9	27.5
Jobseeker's Transitional	22.5	24.7
Recoverable Benefits & Assistance	27.8	-
Jobseeker's Benefit	20.0	23.2
Carer's Support Grant *	17.8	25.2
Treatment Benefit	14.0	-
Insurability of Employment	36.9	91.3
Supplementary Welfare Allowance	16.5	25.2
Survivor's Pension (Con)	22.9	34.1
Survivor's Pension (Non-con)	20.4	24.1
Widowed Parent Grant	14.1	-
All Appeals	20.0	26.0

* Previously called Respite Care Grant

Appeal Processing Times by Scheme 01/01/2016 – 31/12/2016

	Average processing times (weeks) Summary Decisions	Average processing times (weeks) Oral Hearings
Blind Person's Pension	18.2	33.8
Carers Allowance	17.6	21.6
Carers Benefit	20.7	22.4
Child Benefit	22.1	38.2
Disability Allowance	14.6	20.1
Illness Benefit	27.2	34.3
Partial Capacity Benefit	27.3	33.6
Domiciliary Care Allowance	24.3	30.6
Deserted Wives Benefit	13.0	32.8
Farm Assist	21.9	26.0
Bereavement Grant	23.1	-
Death Benefit (Pension)	19.7	-
Liabile Relatives	14.0	16.9
Family Income Supplement	20.4	25.5
Invalidity Pension	21.3	28.2
Maternity Benefit	18.9	21.7
One Parent Family Payment	21.7	31.9
State Pension (Contributory)	25.6	45.9
State Pension (Non-Contributory)	22.7	32.9
State Pension (Transition)	67.7	61.3
Occupational Injury Benefit	25.0	31.9
Disablement Pension	25.8	26.8
Incapacity Supplement	27.7	50.9

	Average processing times (weeks) Summary Decisions	Average processing times (weeks) Oral Hearings
Guardian's Payment (Con)	15.8	24.5
Guardian's Payment (Non-Con)	18.4	23.3
Jobseeker's Allowance (Means)	16.7	25.5
Jobseeker's Allowance	16.0	20.9
BTW Family Dividend	21.0	-
Jobseeker's Transitional	19.0	22.3
Recoverable Benefits & Assistance	32.5	31.6
Jobseeker's Benefit	16.0	27.2
Treatment Benefit	17.1	-
Carer's Support Grant *	18.1	23.3
Insurability of Employment	36.6	85.7
Supplementary Welfare Allowance	15.0	24.1
Survivor's Pension (Con)	16.6	28.8
Survivor's Pension (Non-con)	18.4	23.4
Widows Parent Grant	23.5	63.8
All Appeals	17.6	24.1

* Previously called Respite Care Grant

Child Maintenance Payments

61. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if she has satisfied herself that lone parents are being forced through rigorous court proceedings in order to seek child maintenance from an ex-partner; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50582/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Matters relating to maintenance are for the Department of Justice and Equality and for the Family Courts. The Family Law (Maintenance of Spouses and Children) Act 1976 provides that spouses/civil partners and unmarried parents are required to maintain each other according to their means and needs. Parents, whether married or not, are responsible for the maintenance of their dependent children. Part 12 of the Social Welfare (Consolidation) Act 2005, as amended, reinforces these civil provisions. In cases where the family unit has broken down, these obligations continue to apply and relevant maintenance payments can be arranged either directly or through the Department of Justice and Equality supports like the Family Mediation Service, the Legal Aid Board and the Courts. The arrangement of maintenance is therefore a matter between both parents regardless of whether or not either parent is in receipt of a social welfare payment.

I have no information that suggests that lone parents are being forced through rigorous court proceedings to seek child maintenance.

JobPath Programme

62. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if there will there be a review of the Jobpath scheme in view of the continuing fall in the live register and unemployment. [50577/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): With JobPath the department has procured additional resources to enable it to provide a high quality case managed employment support service to people who are long term unemployed and those most at risk of becoming long-term unemployed. The JobPath service was designed to augment and complement the Department's existing employment service capacity, including that provided by LES. Prior to the introduction of Intreo and JobPath the Department had a case officer to live register ratio of approximately 1,500:1 compared to international benchmarks of less than 200:1. Today with the reduction in the unemployment rate and the increase in capacity, both internally through Intreo and externally through JobPath, the ratio has reached the upper limit of the international norms and is continuing to trend downwards.

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.

The Department has however commenced publishing reports on the performance of the service on a quarterly basis. The report can be accessed on the Department's website.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

State Pension (Contributory) Eligibility

63. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if she will review the entitlements of persons to a State pension (contributory) whose insurance contributions records were interrupted due to periods in receipt of farm assist while farm incomes were low; if the periods that persons were on farm assist can be credited for insurance contribution purposes; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50549/17]

68. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if she will give further consideration to the contributory pension entitlements of farmers whose insurance contribution records were interrupted while they availed of farm assist due to low farm incomes and that subsequently resumed payment of the appropriate insurance contributions; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50550/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I propose to take Questions Nos. 63 and 68 together.

The farm assist scheme was introduced in 1999 to provide income support for low income farmers. It replaced the former smallholders' unemployment assistance payment. In line with the then existing arrangements for unemployment assistance (including smallholders) and pre-retirement allowance, the income of farm assist recipients was exempt from class S PRSI for self-employed workers.

Recipients of farm assist who had previously paid Class S social insurance had the option of paying voluntary contributions to maintain their social insurance record, provided they satisfied the qualifying conditions. Since 1st January 2007, the exemption from class S PRSI has been removed and those receiving jobseeker's allowance and farm assist are subject to Class S PRSI

as self-employed contributors on their self-employed income, provided their annual income is €5,000 or more.

There are no plans to amend legislation regarding the State pension (contributory), to award a maximum rate payment to pensioners who had such a period during 1999-2006 when they were exempt from PRSI.

However, a person aged over 66 with limited PRSI contributions over the course of their life may claim a State pension (non-contributory) if they have an income need, and this entitlement is not based on payment of social insurance contributions. The maximum weekly rate is €227, i.e. over 95% of the maximum contributory pension rate. While it is means-tested, there are very significant disregards which are to the benefit of claimants, and a significant majority of such pensioners are paid at the full rate.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Question No. 64 answered with Question No. 59.

Live Register Data

65. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if her attention has been drawn to the high levels of underemployment and low levels of job quality in County Wexford; the measures she is taking to reduce live register figures there; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50589/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The official measure of unemployment is sourced from the Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS). The most recent data show that unemployment has fallen from a peak of 15% in 2012 to 6.2% by mid-2017. Numbers at work have increased from 1.836 million in Q2 2012 to 2.063 million in Q2 2017, an increase of 227,000 persons. Within the South East region, which includes Wexford, unemployment has fallen from 19.0% to 8.1% over the same period, and numbers in employment have increased by 29,000 to 214,900. While data from the QNHS are not available at the county level, trends in the Live Register can give an indication of underlying trends in local unemployment. Overall, the Live Register in Wexford has fallen by almost 42% in the 5 years to October 2017, close to the reduction of 44% nationally. In the year to October 2017, the Live Register in Wexford has fallen by 1741 people, or almost 14%, again closely in line with the national trend.

Regional QNHS data show increases in employment in the high technology sectors in the South East. Employment in the information and communications sector grew by 50% in the five years up to Q4 2016 compared to 13% nationally. Likewise the professional, scientific and technical activities sector 90%, compared to 19% nationally.

These figures indicate that the county has shared in the overall national recovery both in terms of unemployment and the level and quality of employment.

The Government's primary strategy to tackle unemployment since 2012 is twofold. First, through policies set out in the Action Plan for Jobs, to create an environment in which business can succeed and create jobs. The policy now includes a specific regional Action Plan for the South East Region that has seen over 8,000 jobs created in the region in the last two years.

Second, through Pathways to Work we ensure that as many of these new jobs and other vacancies that arise in our economy are filled by people taken from the Live Register. Under this

policy, the employment service and activation supports provided by my Department are heavily concentrated on the areas of highest unemployment, including those in Wexford.

To date, as I have said, these policies have been effective in reducing unemployment, both nationally and in Wexford. I am confident that they will continue to do so.

Question No. 66 answered with Question No. 53.

Question No. 67 answered with Question No. 55.

Question No. 68 answered with Question No. 63.

Community Employment Schemes Review

69. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the outcome of consultations with key stakeholders regarding community employment and other activation measures which took place in May 2017; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50468/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): My Department's Report - *An Analysis of the Community Employment Programme* was published in April this year. Following the publication my Department undertook nationwide consultation workshops with key Community Employment (CE) scheme stakeholders during May and early June. The consultation was very positive and following the workshops new changes to CE conditions were implemented from 3rd July 2017. The main purpose of these changes is to broaden the availability of CE to a greater number of people on the live register and to standardise other conditions around the length of time a person can participate on the programme. These changes include reducing the general qualifying age for CE, for those on the live register, from 25 to 21 years. In addition it is now easier for previous participants, who have exhausted their CE entitlement, to requalify as participation prior to the year 2007 is disregarded. From July all participants between 21 and 55 years are entitled to one year on the programme and this can be extended by up to 2 more years if they are engaged in a recognised training or education award that is helping them progress towards employment. Furthermore all CE participants age 55 and over can now avail of 3 consecutive years on a CE scheme. There is an overall lifetime limit of 6 years from 2007 (or 7 years if on a disability payment) on CE.

The roll-out of the 'two strand approach' of activation and social inclusion in terms of how places are categorised is also being progressed. This approach recognised that not all CE places are the same – some places are providing an opportunity for those who are very distant from the labour market and but interested in working and delivering services in their local community.

Other places are more directly related to employment opportunities with participants achieving a higher level of award and more labour market relevant work experience. The target progression rate for activation places is set at 50%, given their closer links to job opportunities, while the target progression rate for social inclusion places is set at 20%. In terms of measuring the performance of CE schemes in terms of the progression of participants from both activation and social inclusion places regard for local labour market conditions and the training and education opportunities available.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy .

Defined Benefit Pension Schemes

70. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when proposals on defined benefits schemes for the social welfare pensions and civil registration Bill will be published and the Bill advanced having been first published in May 2017. [50576/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The General Scheme of the Social Welfare and Pensions Bill 2017, which was published in May, contained a number of key measures to respond to the ongoing difficulties in defined benefit schemes and to increase protections for members. The proposals provide for -i) the introduction of a time limit for submitting funding proposals and for the annual preparation and submission of actuarial funding certificates; ii) the introduction of a minimum notice period when an employer decides to cease contributions to a scheme; and

iii) the Pensions Authority to direct payment of a funding obligation payable by the employer to the trustees of the scheme where a scheme is in deficit and the sponsoring employer has failed to adequately support the scheme to address the funding deficit.

The amendments will act to support existing provisions in the Pensions Act and will encourage employers to ensure that schemes are well funded and managed.

Taken collectively, the amendments to the Pensions Act seek a middle road between the current position where employers can abandon DB schemes and full and immediate debt on employer provisions. The amendments are designed to ensure the sustainability of DB schemes for scheme members and continued trust in the pensions system as a whole.

Given the technical and complex nature of the provisions in the General Scheme, including the pension provisions, there was not adequate time to include all of these measures in the text of the Social Welfare, Pensions and Civil Registration Bill 2017 at Second Stage in the Dáil. It is my intention to introduce these amendments to the Bill at Committee Stage.

In addition, I intend bringing forward amendments at Committee Stage to grant a right of entitlement, in certain circumstances, to a spouse's pension for civil partners and same sex spouses who are members of occupational pension schemes.

Drafting of these amendments is at an advanced stage and I expect to bring them forward for publication in the coming weeks.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Question No. 71 answered with Question No. 59.

State Pensions Reform

72. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection her views on the gap between the age at which the State pension becomes payable and the age at which public servants must retire; her plans to address this; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50586/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Social Welfare and Pensions Act 2011 provided for the necessary amendments to increase the State pension age in line with the National Pensions Framework. It provided for an increase in the age for qualification for the State Pension from 66 years to 67 years from 2021, and a further increase to 68 years from 2028. It also discontinued the State Pension (transition) for new

claimants with effect from 1 January 2014. As the State Pension (transition) could only be paid if the recipient had retired, and given such a criterion does not apply to the State pension (contributory), this removed a significant disincentive to those who did not wish to retire at State pension age. The Deputy should note that there is no legally mandated retirement age in the State, and the age at which employees retire is a matter for the contract of employment between them and their employers. The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform is responsible for the terms and conditions of employment and pensions of public servants, including the age at which they may be required to retire. I am informed by that Department that the specific compulsory retirement age and minimum pension age provisions which affect individual public servants reflect their particular employment sector and time of original recruitment.

An interdepartmental group on fuller working lives was chaired last year by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform to consider policy around retirement age in both the public and private sectors and it reported in August 2016. Any question regarding the work of that group, and the retirement age of public servants, should be addressed to the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Pension Provisions

73. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of her plans to introduce an auto enrolment pension system; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50503/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): My Department is drafting what will be a Governmental five year pensions reform plan and I can confirm the Government’s intention to publish and commence the implementation of this reform plan in the near future. The objective of this reform plan will be to provide for a fit for purpose pension system for the coming decades. Perhaps the most fundamental reform contained within the plan will be confirmation of the Government’s intention to develop and introduce a new automatic enrolment supplementary retirement savings system for employees without pensions coverage. The rate of supplementary pension coverage in Ireland is 47% of the working population and this reduces to 35% when the private sector is considered in isolation. Without reform, it is evident that there will not be the increase in savings necessary to ensure that many current workers avoid significant reductions in their living standards at retirement. Automatic enrolment will see a transition from the current and purely voluntary supplementary pension system to one which will, subject to certain parameters, automatically enrol employees into a quality assured retirement savings system. This reform, where the saver will maintain the freedom of choice to opt-out, will encourage long term saving and asset accumulation for retirement. It will increase the wellbeing, financial security and independence of future retirees and furthermore improve the sustainability of our wider pensions system.

Following publication of the reform plan, it is intended that in quarter 1 of 2018 an automatic enrolment policy paper will be published to act as a basis for a public consultation process. Government’s intention is to see first enrolments to the new system by 2021.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Community Employment Schemes Supervisors

74. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of the provision of a pension for community employment supervisors; if she will address the failure to act on the Labour Court recommendation that a pension scheme would be provided; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50466/17]

75. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection her plans to introduce a pension for community employment supervisors; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50594/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I propose to take Questions Nos. 74 and 75 together.

Community Employment (CE) scheme supervisors are employees of private companies in the community and voluntary sector. The State is not responsible for funding pension arrangements for such employees even where the companies in question are reliant on State funding. It is open to individuals to make provision for a pension by way of PRSA which all employers are obliged to facilitate.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that the issue of CE supervisors' pension provision is currently being examined by a Community Sector High Level Forum, chaired by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. My Department is represented on this group, as are IM-PACT, SIPTU, Pobal and other relevant Government Departments.

The Forum last met on 23 November 2017 and I understand that a paper outlining the costs involved was presented. The unions have agreed to review and revert as soon as possible. Following on from this, a meeting is to be arranged between the trade unions and my colleague, Pascal Donoghue T.D., Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputies.

Question No. 76 answered with Question No. 53.

Social Welfare Appeals Delays

77. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the steps she will take to speed up the manner in which various appeals are being dealt with which can cause severe hardship; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50548/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Significant efforts and resources have been devoted to reforming the appeal process in recent years. As a result, appeal processing times improved between 2011 and 2016 from 52.5 weeks for an oral hearing in 2011 to 24.1 weeks in 2016 and from 25.1 weeks for a summary decision in 2011 to 17.6 weeks in 2016. I understand from the Chief Appeals Officer that there has been a slight increase in processing times in 2017 with oral hearings taking, on average, 26 weeks and summary decisions taking 20 weeks to finalise. A number of factors have contributed to the increase including the retirement of six experienced Appeals Officers during the first half of 2017. However, she is hopeful that processing times will improve as a number of newly appointed Officers gain experience in their roles. Specific actions taken to reduce processing times include: liaising with HR to ensure that vacancies are filled quickly; ensuring that training is given to new Appeals Officers as early as possible; working with the Department to reduce time in submitting appeal files; and a restructuring of the mechanism for recording appeal decisions.

It is open to an appellant to claim supplementary welfare allowance pending the outcome of their appeal if their means are insufficient to meet their needs.

The Chief Appeals Officer assures me that processing times are a priority. However, the drive for efficiency must be balanced with the competing demand to ensure that decisions are consistent and of high quality.

Brexit Staff

78. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Taoiseach the estimated cost of hiring additional Brexit staff in his Department; and the cost by grade. [50914/17]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Simon Coveney): My Department has an International, EU and Northern Ireland Division headed by a Second Secretary General, who also acts as the Sherpa for EU business, including Brexit issues. The staff resources for the Division vary from time to time but currently amount to approximately 25 wholetime equivalent posts across the full range of policy areas.

The work of the Division includes supporting the work of Cabinet Committee C, which deals with EU affairs, including Brexit, and supports me in my role as a member of the European Council. In particular, this Cabinet Committee assists the Government in its ongoing consideration of Brexit issues including input to the negotiation process, both on the issues that are of unique or particular concern to Ireland, and more generally.

The Division prepares me for engagement on a wide range of EU issues, as well as the debate on the future of Europe, and supports efforts to develop our strategic alliances in a post-Brexit scenario.

The Division also provides advice and support to me in relation to Northern Ireland Affairs and British Irish relations, and Brexit issues in that context.

Staff in other divisions also contribute to the work on Brexit. For example the Economic Division advises me on economic policy aimed at supporting sustainable economic growth, with a particular focus on jobs and competitiveness including possible economic impacts of Brexit.

My Department also works closely with other relevant Departments including, in particular, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade which has lead responsibility for Brexit.

The Department's staffing needs are reviewed on an ongoing basis and provision has been made in the Department's 2018 administrative budget should additional resources be required.

Taoiseach's Meetings and Engagements

79. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach if he has spoken to First Minister Arlene Foster since 12 November 2017 regarding Northern Ireland and Brexit. [50535/17]

The Taoiseach: During my visit to Enniskillen on 12 November I took the opportunity to meet with DUP Leader Arlene Foster to discuss the ongoing political situation in Northern Ireland and Brexit. I have not spoken with Ms Foster since then.

Brexit Negotiations

80. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the Government's position on the potential inclusion of investor court mechanisms in a trade negotiation mandate with the UK post Brexit in view of the fact that the legality of such mechanisms is currently being challenged at the European Court of Justice; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50856/17]

Taoiseach and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Leo Varadkar): In late 2015, the European Commission proposed a new approach to investment protection based on an international Investment Court System (ICS) to replace the historic Investor State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) system which required updating. ICS goes a long way to meet the concerns on transparency, legitimacy and public interests that had arisen under ISDS.

The ICS system is composed of a first instance tribunal and an appeal mechanism based on clearly defined rules and operating on similar principles to the WTO Appellate Body, with qualified judges and transparent proceedings. The ability of investors to take a case before the Tribunal is precisely defined and limited to cases such as targeted discrimination on the base of gender, race or religion, nationality, expropriation without compensation, or denial of justice. Forum-shopping (i.e. seeking to select from a number of different options the option perceived to most likely offer the most favourable outcome) will not be possible. Claims deemed to be frivolous will be dismissed quickly, and multiple and parallel proceedings will be avoided.

The implications of the ICS for Ireland are viewed as positive as they bring greater clarity to Irish business, especially SMEs, on the modalities of an open and transparent dispute resolution system as well as confirming that a State can never be forced to change legislation, only to pay fair compensation in cases where the investor is deemed to have been treated unfairly.

The aim of the European Commission is to establish a Multilateral Investment Court, modelled on arbitrator panels currently operating under the WTO, and other Investment Tribunals. It will build on the EU's approach on its bilateral Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) and be a major departure from the system of investor-to-State dispute settlement (ISDS) based on ad hoc commercial arbitration. The recently concluded EU-Canada trade agreement - CETA - and the EU-Vietnam trade agreement both contain a reference to the establishment of a permanent multilateral investment court. Work continues at EU level on this matter.

In the context of a possible EU-UK Free Trade Agreement, which is the stated objective of the UK Government, it is far too early in the Brexit negotiation process to know what the precise trading relationship will be. In that regard, Ireland will, in due course, be advocating for as comprehensive a trading relationship as possible and this should include appropriate governance and implementation mechanisms.

Brexit Staff

81. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the estimated cost of hiring additional Brexit staff in his Department; the cost by grade; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50914/17]

Taoiseach and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Leo Varadkar): In 2016, my Department established a dedicated Brexit Unit in response to the United Kingdom's decision to leave the European Union. The Brexit Unit is responsible for supporting me in my position at the Cabinet Committee dealing with Brexit and with the Management

Board in my Department, ensuring a coordinated and coherent approach to Brexit across my Department and its Agencies.

The Brexit Unit is led at Assistant Secretary level within the EU Affairs and Trade Policy Division, and is supported by one Principal, two Assistant Principals with a third to be assigned in December as part of workforce planning, two Higher Executive Officers and one Clerical Officer.

The estimated costs of this Unit, in respect of staff, is outlined in the table below.

Grade	Average Salary Cost	No. Serving
Principal Officer	€90,591.38	1
Assistant Principal Officer	€71,884.52	3[1]
Higher Executive Officer	€57,209.07	2
Clerical Officer	€31,011.85	1

[1] Third Assistant Principal to be assigned December 2017

The work of very many Business Units is impacted by Brexit and my Department as a whole has prioritised the Brexit challenges across all Divisions and actively keeps this under review in the context of ongoing workforce planning.

Brexit Staff

82. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the estimated cost of hiring additional Brexit staff for Enterprise Ireland, the IDA and the local enterprise offices; the cost by grade; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50915/17]

Taoiseach and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Leo Varadkar): As part of Budget 2017, the Department secured an additional €3 million Pay allocation to help in responding to the challenges and opportunities associated with Brexit.

Enterprise Ireland's exchequer pay provision this year included an additional €1.7 million to assist the agency in the recruitment of an additional 39 Brexit specific posts to work alongside existing staff within the agency. Of the 39 Brexit-related posts, which includes providing assistance to the Local Enterprise Offices, 34 have been filled to date and 5 are currently under active recruitment. It is anticipated that the remaining posts will be filled by year end. The breakdown by grade of the additional staff recruited so far is as follows:

- Level F x 1
- Level E x 27
- Level D x 5
- Level C x 1

The average annual pay costs of the Level E and F posts combined are €82,700 per post. The average annual pay costs of the Level D and C posts combined are €54,200 per annum. Some of the posts involved are based overseas and the associated salary costs for international posts will vary based on the job market in each particular country.

The full-year pay costs, inclusive of employers RSI contributions, associated with the 34

staff already recruited would therefore be in the region of €2.64 million. Enterprise Ireland is utilising Own Resource Income to supplement its Pay requirements to cover its overall staffing cohort.

IDA Ireland's pay budget this year included an additional €750,000 to support the immediate requirement for an additional client-facing posts. These additional staff are supplementing existing IDA staff numbers in the context of the extra workload associated with Brexit and are also assisting the Authority in capitalising on Brexit opportunities that may arise.

Nine additional posts have been filled to date and the annual costs, inclusive of employers RSI contributions, are broken down as follows:

- 3 x Level E at approximately €72,000 per post.
- 5 x Level D at approximately €45,000 per post.
- 1 x Level C at approximately €26,000.

The full-year pay costs associated with these staff would therefore be in the region of €470,000 per annum.

A further additional €3 million in Pay was secured by the Department in "Budget 2018" for next year to further assist with our Brexit response. Of this Enterprise Ireland is being provided with an additional €1.3 million and IDA Ireland an additional €700,000 to recruit additional Brexit related staff. This should enable the Agencies to recruit a further 25 ~ 30 additional staff during 2018. The specific pay allocations for my Department, Offices and Agencies will be finalised and published in the 2018 Revised Estimates Volume during December.

Brexit Expenditure

83. Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the estimated cost of an additional €100 million in Brexit related loans offered by the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland if approved to the Irish State; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50916/17]

85. Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the costing of the Brexit loan scheme announced in budget 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50923/17]

Taoiseach and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I propose to take Questions Nos. 83 and 85 together.

The Brexit Loan Scheme announced during Budget 2018 will provide affordable working capital financing to eligible Irish businesses that are either currently impacted by Brexit, or will be in the future. The Scheme will be delivered by the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland (SBCI) through commercial lenders to get much needed working capital into Irish businesses.

The Exchequer cost of the Brexit Loan Scheme will be €23 million, with the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation contributing €14 million and the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine contributing €9 million. The combined €23 million will be used by the SBCI to leverage the €300 million to be offered to SMEs through the Brexit Loan Scheme.

The €300 million fund is underpinned by a counter-guarantee from the European Commission and EIB Group through its InnovFin Loan Guarantee Scheme, which is an important factor

when assessing both the cost of the Scheme and the risk to the Exchequer. There is no additional capacity under the existing terms of the counter-guarantee scheme which has been agreed with InnovFin. The cost of an increase in the size of the Scheme would depend on a number of factors, including whether, and at what terms, increased capacity under the counter-guarantee could be agreed.

Enterprise Ireland Funding

84. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the estimated cost of funding for mentoring programmes provided by Enterprise Ireland; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50917/17]

Taoiseach and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Enterprise Ireland's mission is to help Irish companies achieve global success. Enterprise Ireland's Mentor Network programme helps companies to grow faster and survive longer. The mentoring programme matches new, early stage and established business owners with experienced business mentors. Mentors are entrepreneurs and senior executives who have experienced the kind of challenges - and opportunities – that companies face in their businesses. Assignments are typically focused on:

- Commercialisation of new products and services
- More targeted sales and marketing
- Expansion into new markets
- Strategic business planning
- Attracting outside investment and funding options
- Improved Research & Development, design, innovation, production and logistics
- Better HR management and management succession.

So far in 2017, Enterprise Ireland has set up 463 one to one assignments with clients; 423 with Enterprise Ireland clients and 40 with non-Enterprise Ireland clients i.e. Local Enterprise Offices (LEO) IDA Ireland and Udaras. These assignments range from 3 to 10 sessions with a business mentor. In addition to one to one assignments, 213 companies / promoters presented their investor ready business plans for feedback at specially convened mentor-panel practice pitching sessions. There are currently 407 business mentors on the Enterprise Ireland Network and there are 606 assignments in progress.

The cost of running the Enterprise Ireland Mentor Network programme in 2017 is €508,945.

Question No. 85 answered with Question No. 83.

IDA Ireland Site Visits

86. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of visits organised by the IDA to the midland region to date in 2017; the number of these visits that were to IDA sites in Athlone and Mullingar, respectively; the details of all vacant property owned by the IDA in Mullingar and Athlone, County Westmeath; if the IDA has planned other visits to Mullingar before 31 December 2017; and if he will make

a statement on the matter. [50894/17]

Taoiseach and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Leo Varadkar): IDA Ireland markets Mullingar and Athlone as part of the Midlands Region, which includes three other counties: Longford, Laois and Offaly. There are 30 multinational companies based in the region, employing 4,280 people across all four counties. County Westmeath has a strong base of foreign direct investment (FDI) with 13 companies employing 2,571 people.

The Agency is determined to increase those numbers and it has appointed a dedicated Regional Manager to the region to further aid its efforts to grow investment in the wider area.

To the end of the third quarter this year there have been 47 site visits to the Midlands. The IDA does not provide details on the specific locations visited by clients, however, on account of commercial sensitivity. It should also be noted that whilst site visits can be a useful indicator of new investment interest, they are not necessarily indicative of the potential for FDI in an area. I would point out, in this regard, that almost 70% of investment comes from existing IDA clients.

In terms of property available for marketing to potential investors, there is a 22.5 hectare IDA Ireland business and technology park located in Marlinstown, Co Westmeath. The park is fully zoned and serviced and is currently home to one IDA client company, an engineering and industrial firm which employs approximately 40 people at the site.

The IDA is also investing directly in property solutions for FDI in the Midlands and has received planning permission for one office building in Athlone, which should be ready for occupation in 2018. This is in addition to an advanced technology building which is now occupied by a pharmaceutical company.

The table provides full details of the buildings available for marketing in both Mullingar and Athlone.

Location	Building Name	Total Size sq. ft./sq. m.
Athlone	AF4 (former NPD facility)	41,990 sq ft/3,901sqm
Mullingar	Clonmore facility	25,200 sq ft/2,341sqm

Exports Data

87. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the average margin per sector for traders exporting to the United Kingdom, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50920/17]

Taoiseach and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Neither my Department nor its agencies collect data relating to the average profit margins across the variety of sectors that export to the United Kingdom.

However I can state that, as set out in my Department's recently published strategy in response to Brexit entitled "Building Stronger Business", Enterprise Ireland has been particularly active in supporting firms impacted by Brexit. Specifically, in the immediate aftermath of the referendum result, Enterprise Ireland was in contact with each of its client companies that export to the UK. As a result, Enterprise Ireland knows, in detail, the level of their clients' exposure to Brexit associated risks.

In March 2017 EI published its international events programme for 2017 to support Irish exporters which lists 145 events scheduled in Ireland and overseas to include 46 international trade visits with focus on market diversification into Eurozone and North America. Enterprise

Ireland has also launched a ‘Global Ambition Campaign’ which is a communications campaign to promote Irish companies and their products and services to international buyers. Enterprise Ireland also launched a new strategy to increase exports to the Eurozone by 50 per cent (€2 billion) by 2020 – this is a key response to any potential barriers which may adversely impact trade with the UK.

Also in March, 2017, EI’s ‘PrepareforBrexit’ communications campaign featuring the ‘Brexit SME Scorecard’ (on www.prepareforbrexit.ie) was launched. The ‘Brexit SME Scorecard’ is an interactive online platform which can be used by all Irish companies to self-assess their exposure to Brexit. The Scorecard uses a short diagnostic to generate a report scoring SME performance across a range of metrics against best practice. This can then be used to direct firms towards relevant schemes, programmes or other forms of assistance.

Enterprise Ireland will continue to engage one-to-one on a regular basis with clients to support their preparations for Brexit and will promote increased awareness and preparation across the economy for the various challenges posed by Brexit through the Brexit Scorecard. As set out in the Department’s strategy, Enterprise Ireland will develop stabilisation options to ensure, where necessary, that larger, strategically important companies that are viable but vulnerable can make the necessary investment to overcome the challenges of Brexit. Enterprise Ireland will continue to support companies to maintain and grow opportunities in the UK market, while, at the same time, supporting companies to grow market opportunities in the Single Market, and in particular in the Eurozone.

Looking to the medium to longer term, Enterprise Ireland will continue to support companies in terms of innovation, competitiveness, management and financial capability to become more resilient in international markets and to be competitive with other economies.

I should also add that work is progressing on a proposed Brexit-related Working Capital Guarantee Scheme and the scoping out of the need for a longer term Business Development Loan Scheme which would assist firms in investing for a post-Brexit environment.

Brexit Staff

88. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of staff currently employed in State agencies and his Department tasked with issues related to Brexit; the number of staff by grade, agency and unit; the number of vacant positions; the average cost by grade and agency; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50921/17]

Taoiseach and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Leo Varadkar): As the Deputy may be aware, an additional €3 million was secured for my Department in respect of Pay in Budget 2017 and targeted specifically to assist with increased staffing needs for the Department and a number of our Agencies to deal with the evolving Brexit scenario. These funds are enabling the Department and, primarily, our Agencies to recruit additional staff to supplement existing staffing numbers in the context of the workload associated with Brexit.

The additional €3m was allocated as follows:

- The Department itself (€250,000)
- Enterprise Ireland (€1,700,000)
- IDA Ireland (€750,000)

- Science Foundation Ireland (€150,000)
- The Health and Safety Authority (€150,000)

Department

A dedicated Brexit Unit was established in 2016 and is led at Assistant Secretary level within the EU Affairs and Trade Policy Division of my Department. Its main focus is to coordinate and represent the Departmental and Agencies response to Brexit and to support me in my position at the Cabinet Committee dealing with Brexit. The designated official, at Assistant Secretary level, is supported by one Principal (average annual salary cost of €90,591.38 per post), two Assistant Principals with a third to be assigned in December as part of workforce planning (average annual salary cost of €71,884.52 per post), two Higher Executive Officers (average annual salary cost of €57,209.07 per post) and one Clerical Officer (average annual salary cost of €31,011.85 per post).

As the work of very many Business Units is impacted by Brexit, my Department as a whole has prioritised the Brexit challenges across all Divisions and actively keeps this under review. In this regard, it is intended to review the Department's workforce plan (2017-2019) as part of the Department's business planning processes for 2018 where the Brexit Agenda will be a priority.

Enterprise Ireland

Enterprise Ireland was given sanction to hire 39 Brexit-related posts to work alongside existing staff within the agency. Of the 39 Brexit-related posts for Enterprise Ireland, 34 have been filled to date and 5 are currently under active recruitment. It is anticipated that the remaining posts will be filled by the end of the year. The average annual salary cost per grade for the 39 posts is €77,687.

IDA Ireland

The IDA received sanction for additional Brexit related-posts and identified 10 client-facing posts and have filled 9 of these to date. Recruitment is underway for the remaining post. The 10 posts are allocated across Operational Teams with 3 Level E posts (average annual salary cost of €65,093 per post), 5 Level D posts (average annual salary cost of €41,472 per post) and 2 Level C posts (average annual salary cost of €23,260 per post).

Science Foundation Ireland

Science Foundation Ireland received sanction to hire Brexit related posts and specific additional resources are being added to functions that are engaged in BREXIT related activity. In this regard one appointment has been made, with a candidate due to commence in November. A second, similar appointment is at contract stage with an anticipated start in January. One further post is anticipated to be filled shortly thereafter. The average annual salary cost per grade for the posts is €65,093.

Science Foundation Ireland continues to examine and prepare for the challenges and opportunities associated with BREXIT. This activity is carried out across all functions of the organisation and is coordinated by an internal BREXIT Working Group which is chaired by a member of the Science Foundation Ireland Executive Committee. Expertise is drawn from across Science Foundation Ireland, with six staff members currently engaged in a significant level of BREXIT related activity. The costs associated with this activity are estimated at €217,000 per annum.

Health and Safety Authority

The Health and Safety Authority (HSA) received sanction to fill two Brexit related posts at AP Socio-Economist level (average annual salary cost of approx. €65,000) and at Grade III inspector level (average annual salary cost of €45,000). The recruitment process is in hand.

Recently, a further additional €3 million in respect of Pay has been secured for my Department in Budget 2018, for the purposes of recruiting additional staff resources to further respond to Brexit and help meet the Government plans to double Ireland's global footprint.

It should also be borne in mind that in addition to specific Brexit-related posts within the Department and its Agencies that have and are being recruited, there are many existing roles and business units impacted by Brexit which are playing a vital part in responding to it.

Competition and Consumer Protection Commission

89. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of full-time and part-staff employed in the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission, CCPC, in each of the years over the 2010 to 2016 period and to date in 2017, by staff according to each Civil Service grade, legal personnel and other staff; and the funding allocated to the CCPC in each of the years 2010 to 2016 and to date in 2017, in tabular form. [50927/17]

Taoiseach and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The information sought by the Deputy is set out in the table.

The Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (2014 to date) *

	Staff Numbers			Grades **													Exchequer Funding
	No of Staff	Full-time	Part-Time	Chair	Member	PO	AP (Higher)	AP	***Case Officer	HEO	AO	SO	EO	CO	Service Officer	****Legal Personnel	
2017	90	90	0	1	3	9	4	13	14	21	1	0	21	2	1	4	€12,138,000
2016	89	89	0	1	3	9	1	12	15	19	1	1	23	3	1	4	€12,141,000
2015	89	89	0	1	3	9	0	8	27	12	0	1	22	5	1	2	€12,230,000
2014	86	86	0	1	4	11	0	7	27	9	0	1	19	6	1	3	€12,287,000

The Competition Authority (2010 - 2013)

	Staff Numbers			Grades**													Exchequer Funding
	No of Staff	Full-time	Part-Time	Chair	Member	PO	AP (Higher)	AP	***Case Officer	HEO	AO	SO	EO	CO	Service Officer	****Legal Personnel	
2013	49	49	0	1	3	9	0	1	27	1	0	0	5	2	0	2	€5,127,000
2012	47.7	47.7	0	1	2	10	0	1	24.3	2	0	0	3.4	4	0	2	€4,654,000
2011	46.7	46.7	0	1	2	10	0	1	23.3	2	0	0	3.4	4	0	2	€5,116,000
2010	44.7	44.7	0	1	2	10	0	1	22.3	2	0	0	3.4	3	0	2	€4,734,000

National Consumer Agency (2010 - 2013)

	Staff Numbers			Grades **													Exchequer Funding
	No of Staff	Full-time	Part-Time	CEO	Member	PO	AP (Higher)	AP	***Case Officer	HEO	AO	SO	EO	CO	Service Officer	****Legal Personnel	
2013	51	51	0	1	0	3	0	6	N/A	13	0	1	19	7	1	1	€7,360,000
2012	57	57	0	0	0	4	0	7	N/A	16	0	1	18	10	1	1	€7,841,000
2011	43	43	0	1	0	2	0	4	N/A	10	0	1	15	9	1	1	€8,366,000
2010	45	45	0	1	0	3	0	3	N/A	10	0	2	17	9	0	1	€7,232,000

*Not included in the tables: A Detective Sergeant on secondment from the Garda National Economic Crime Bureau (GNECB) 2010-2017 inclusive.

**Where the grade title is different, secondees have been categorised in the closest relevant grade Civil Service grades

*** The Case Officer Grade did not exist in the National Consumer Agency

**** Legal Personnel includes staff employed as Legal Advisors (PO & AP equivalents & are included under these headings for the total count), it does not include Case Officers or HEOs who are qualified lawyers employed as investigators

Research and Development Funding

90. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the amount of funding allocated to the programme for research in third level institutions on an annual basis in each of the years 2010 to 2016 and to date in 2017; the amount subsequently expended in each year; the amount of funding that has been allocated in 2018; the amount of funding that has been ring-fenced for research and frontier research in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50930/17]

Taoiseach and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The Programme for Research in Third-Level Institutions (PRTLTI) was launched in 1998, with five cycles of expenditure to date. The Programme is designed to facilitate Ireland's Higher Education Institutions to produce world class research in key strategic areas including bioscience/biomedical; medical technologies; energy, environment and marine; food and drink; social sciences and humanities; ICT and advanced communications and; platform technologies and materials.

The PRTLTI has supported the provision of top-class research infrastructure (buildings, laboratories and cutting edge equipment) as well as human capital development, through Structured PhD/Emergent Technology programmes across Ireland's Higher Education Institutes (HEIs). My Department took over responsibility for the PRTLTI in May 2010, from the Department of Education and Skills. The Higher Education Authority (HEA) continues to administer Cycle 5 of the Programme on behalf of my Department.

The allocations and amounts expended on the PRTLTI in the years 2010 – 2017 are set out in Table A below. The full amount allocated in the Department's Vote is expended to the HEA within the year, with some increases in funding due to Supplementary Estimates (as detailed below).

Table A - PRTLTI funding 2010-2017

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Allocation €m	49.9	57.9	54.7	45.2	39	55.5*	30.4**	14.4

*2015 allocation included a Supplementary Estimate of €23.5m in December 2015

**2016 allocation included a Supplementary Estimate of €20m in December 2016

The PRTLTI allocation for 2018 is €14.3m. A portion of this will be used to part pay outstanding bills for PRTLTI Cycle 5 projects. In addition, a portion of this allocation will be used to commence a postgraduate programme funding both PhDs and Research Masters, as per the action in Innovation 2020. This new programme will be administered by Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) and will fund postgraduate enrolments in disciplines under their remit. Further details will be provided by SFI over the coming months.

There is no specific allocation within the PRTLTI for frontier research. Action 3.8 of Innovation 2020, Ireland's strategy for research and development, science and technology, provides for a new programme to fund frontier research. On 6th April, 2017, the Irish Research Council, an agency of the Department of Education and Skills launched the Frontier Research Programme (LAUREATE), with initial funding of €2.5 million.

My Department and its agencies are important funders of research, with expenditure of €394m in 2016. This accounts for approximately half of total Government investment in R&D. Other Departments also provided funding for research and development across sectors, estimated to be at €367m in 2016. Government investment in R&D includes funding for programmes that encompass all disciplines and all types of research.

Office of the Director of Corporate Enforcement Staff

91. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of staff in the Office of the Director of Corporate Enforcement in each of the years 2010 to 2016 and to date in 2017, by account, administrative staff, legal personnel and other staff, in tabular form; the amount of funding allocated to the ODCE in each of the years 2014 to 2016 and to date in 2017 and the allocation for 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50931/17]

Taoiseach and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The information requested by the Deputy is provided in the table:

1. No. of staff¹ serving in the Office of the Director of Corporate Enforcement (ODCE) (2010-2017)

GRADE 2	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017 3
Director	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Corporate Compliance Manager	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0
Legal Adviser	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	1
Principal Solicitor	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
Digital Forensic Specialist	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1

GRADE 2	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017 3
Enforcement Portfolio Manager	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Principal Officer	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	1
Forensic Accountant/ Professional Accountant Grade 1	2	2	2	1	1	0	5	5
Solicitor	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	1
Assistant Principal Officer	4	4	4	4	3	3	3	3
Higher Executive Officer	9.7	8.7	7.6	8	7	7	7	7.3
Executive Officer	6.7	6.7	6.8	6.8	5.8	5.8	5	4.8
Clerical Officer	8.3	8.3	7.5	7.5	6.7	6.9	6.7	5.7
Total	40.7	39.7	36.9	36.3	32.5	30.7	32.7	31.8
Gardaí 4	10.1	10.1	8.6	6.6	7	6	5	7

1 Refers to number of FTE's

2 If further information is required regarding the job specification, an organisation chart is included in each of the ODCE's Annual Reports since its inception, which are published on its website www.odce.ie.

3 Staffing as at 29th November 2017

4 A staff complement of 7 Gardaí are assigned to the ODCE to assist with its criminal investigation / prosecution functions. Additional resources were assigned to the Office in the period 2010-2013 to assist in the Anglo Irish Bank investigation.

The following information is of relevance in interpreting the data set out in the Table above.

The ODCE traditionally had 3 Legal Advisers. One of the post holders retired in 2016 and the Principal Solicitor post holder transferred out of the ODCE in January 2017. The Director reconfigured the job specifications associated with both roles to better reflect the organisation's current and future needs, on foot of which a competition was held to recruit 2 Enforcement Portfolio Managers. One of those posts has recently been filled and the other successful candidate is due to take up the role in the coming weeks.

A second Legal Adviser post holder transferred out of the ODCE in June 2017. The Director has, similarly, reconfigured the job specification associated with that role to better reflect the organisation's current and future needs. As a consequence, the Department is currently engaging with the Public Appointments Service with a view to recruiting an Enforcement Lawyer. That position is expected to be advertised in the coming weeks.

The Digital Forensics Specialist is a new role that was created following a review, undertaken by the Director of the ODCE's skills mix and capabilities.

Similarly, 5 new Forensic Accountant posts were created following the aforementioned review (bringing to 7 the number of approved posts). Following two open competitions, 6 Forensic Accountants were recruited, of which one has since been promoted. A third competition, aimed at filling the 2 vacancies, is scheduled to be advertised in the coming weeks.

The Compliance Manager post fell vacant in November 2016, following the promotion of the post holder. The Director has indicated that this post, similarly, requires to be reconfigured to better reflect the ODCE's current and future needs. However, prioritisation has been afforded to filling the Forensic Accountant, Digital Forensics Specialist, Enforcement Portfolio Manager and Enforcement Lawyer posts respectively and to assimilating a substantial number of new, and senior, staff into the organisation.

Reflective of the process of further professionalisation of the ODCE that has been underway over the past 5 years, the significant increase in professional staff has been accompanied by a reduction in staff numbers in certain general civil service grades.

An Inspector has been assigned to the ODCE by Garda management in recent days, as a consequence of which the ODCE is now at its approved Garda complement of 7 staff.

2. Amount of funding allocated to the Office of the Director of Corporate Enforcement (ODCE) (2014-2017)

ODCE	REV Allocations	Actual In Year Spend
2014 Pay Non-Pay	2,4652,207	2,216797
2014 Total	4,672	3,013
2015 Pay Non-Pay	2,8842,207	2,156916
2015 Total	5,091	3,072
2016 Pay Non-Pay	2,8082,207	2,006722
2016 Total	5,015	2,728
2017 Pay Non-Pay	2,8382,057	1,687616
2017 Total	4,895	2,303

5 Data as at 31st October 2017

In terms of the underspend in recent years, a significant element of the non-pay allocation provided to the ODCE provides for possible legal costs. These costs, as well as their timing, are difficult to forecast as the ODCE has little or no control over the timing of when the cases will be determined. It is also the case that the ODCE cannot be sure of the outcome of cases in terms of costs orders and it cannot anticipate the scale of costs that other parties may seek. Whilst it is entirely prudent that provision continue to be made to meet legal costs in the ODCE's subhead, a corollary is uncertainty in relation to the amount and timing etc. of such costs.

Specific provision was made in the Office's pay allocation from 2015 to allow for the recruitment of additional staff, including additional specialist staff such as forensic accountants and a digital forensic specialist. The reality, however, has been that notwithstanding the increased pay allocation, it has taken some time to effect the recruitment of the specialist staff concerned, as the Department, in common with many other State organisations, faces significant challenges in the recruitment of high quality professional staff.

The pay related costs for the Gardaí assigned to the ODCE are borne by the Department of Justice and Equality and such pay costs are not reflected in the financial table above.

The distribution of the 2018 allocations across my Department's Vote, including that of the Office of the Director of Corporate Enforcement, will be determined through the 2018 Revised Estimates Volume (REV) process. It is expected that publication of the 2018 REV allocations will be made by my colleague, the Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform in early December 2018.

Job Creation Targets

92. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the national and regional job targets and unemployment rate projections under the programme for Government in each of the years 2016 to 2020 and enterprise 2025, by year; the annual progress on actual figures and rates at the end of 2016 and to date in 2017 relating to these targets; the monitoring and reporting mechanisms in place; his job targets up to 2020, by region, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50932/17]

Taoiseach and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The goal under the 2016 Programme for a Partnership Government was to deliver an extra 200,000 jobs by 2020, of which 135,000 will be outside of Dublin.

With a strong focus on job creation and retention, the annual Action Plan for Jobs provides a framework for the collaboration between Government Departments and Agencies to achieve this objective.

Since Q2 2016, employment has increased by 2.3% with an extra 48,000 in employment. The number of unemployed fell by 45,100 (a 2.4% reduction) leading to a reduction of the unemployment rate from 8.6% in Q2 2016 to 6% in October 2017. For the first time since Q3 2010 the number of long term unemployed accounts for less than 50% of total unemployment.

Between June 2015 and January 2016, my Department published eight Regional Action Plans for Jobs, aimed at raising employment levels in the regions and facilitating them to achieve their economic potential. Each plan contains a series of actions with timelines for delivery between 2015-2017, through improved collaboration between enterprise agencies and other stakeholders supporting enterprise development in the regions.

The Action Plan for Jobs and Regional Action Plans for Jobs are monitored by the Department of the Taoiseach on a quarterly basis, with the Regional Action Plans for Jobs overseen by a Regional Implementation Committee.

The Regional Action Plans for Jobs are supported by a Regional Enterprise Fund of up to €60 million, which was launched in May 2017 to drive enterprise development and job creation in the regions. This funding has been provided by DBEI, through Enterprise Ireland, to 2020. DBEI has granted €150 million over five years to the IDA regional property programme, which invests in property solutions outside Dublin.

The annual Action Plan for Jobs combined with the Regional Action Plan for Jobs are delivering significant results, as evidenced through the rise in employment since 2016 (please see the supplementary material attached).

An objective within Enterprise 2025 is to ensure that unemployment across the regions is within one percent of the national average by end 2020. Although considerable progress is being made overall, two regions - the Midlands and the South East - have yet to achieve our ambition. These two regions were the greatest hit during the recession. There are differences in the enterprise structure, occupational profiles and productivity levels of the enterprise base across regions which can explain the differences in the recovery to some extent. The Action Plan for Jobs, and Regional Action plans are key mechanisms for implementation and monitoring of progress for Enterprise 2025.

A comprehensive Review of Enterprise 2025 is being finalised and the analysis points to solid progress toward achieving a suite of metrics, including employment, export growth, start-up activity, scaling of Irish owned enterprises etc.

Emigrant Support Services

93. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the annual targets for attaining 70,000 returned emigrants per year, in tabular form. [50933/17]

Taoiseach and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Leo Varadkar): This Government's goal is to support the creation of an additional 200,000 jobs by 2020 with 135,000 outside Dublin and to attract back at least 70,000 emigrants by 200,000. The whole of Government effort to deliver on these objective is the coordinated by the yearly Action Plans for Jobs.

The CSO estimates that between April 2016 and April 2017, 27,400 Irish emigrants returned to Ireland. As the economy continues to grow and the economy approaches full employment, this trend is likely to continue.

Since the first Action Plan for Jobs was launched in early 2012, there are over 224,000 more people at work bringing total employment in the State to almost 2,063,000 by end of Quarter 2, 2017. My Department and agencies have a range of initiatives to connect with Irish emigrants (and others) and outline the careers and entrepreneurial opportunities in Ireland:

- IDA Ireland actively promotes Ireland as a location for new investment and Enterprise Ireland has specific targets to attract entrepreneurs to Ireland with a focused marketing programme underway in international markets.

- Since 2016, My Department is funding Tech/Life Ireland – a partnership with Enterprise Ireland, IDA Ireland and the Irish Technology Industry to promote brand Ireland as a top destination to pursue a career in technology and attract 3,000 top tech professionals to Ireland each year. Industry is playing an important role in supporting the initiative and driving its development.

- Science Foundation Ireland encourages leading researchers to move to Ireland raising Ireland's profile as a location for excellent research and career advancement. For instance, each year, SFI awards two Saint Patrick Day Science Medals to distinguished Irish scientist, engineer or technology leaders living and working in the USA: one of academic and one for industry.

Ensuring a continued focus on attracting foreign direct investment and maintaining and improving competitiveness is critical to attracting talent back to Ireland.

State Bodies Funding

94. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the funding allocated in 2016 and 2017 to each State agency under the aegis of his Department including local enterprise offices, Science Foundation Ireland, InterTradeIreland, the IDA and Enterprise Ireland, in tabular form; and the 2018 budget allocation for same. [50949/17]

Taoiseach and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The distribution of the 2018 allocations to the State Agencies under my Department will be determined as part of the 2018 Revised Estimates process which is currently being finalised and is expected to be published early next month. The allocations provided to my Department's Agencies for 2016 and 2017 are set out in the Table below:

Agency	2016 Allocation (inc Supplementary Estimate) €000	2017 Allocation €000
Intertrade	€7,465	€7,960
Industrial Development Authority	€147,480	€179,264
National Standards Authority of Ireland	€6,237	€5,802
Enterprise Ireland	€247,457	€269,502
Local Enterprise Offices	€28,939	€32,931
Science Foundation Ireland	€184,000	€172,631
Health & Safety Authority	€17,544	€18,112
Irish Auditing and Accounting Supervisory Authority	€1,963	€2,105
Competition and Consumer Protection Commission	€10,099	€12,138

Health and Safety Authority Expenditure

95. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the amount allocated by the Health and Safety Authority for farm safety initiatives in 2016, 2017 and 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51238/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Pat Breen): The table shows the funding allocated by the Health and Safety Authority for promotional activities regarding farm safety initiatives in 2016, 2017 and 2018.

Table of Expenditure on Farm Safety Initiatives 2016 to 2018

Year	Allocation *
2016	€384,000 (estimated)
2017	€287,000 (projected)
2018	€287,000 (projected)**

*Note - that annual figures allocated include some cross sectoral initiatives where the allocation could also be relevant to other sectors – it is not possible to extract this so it has been included as the full figure. In addition, some of the advertising initiatives would cross years, so the yearly figure is an estimate of the allocation relevant to that year.

** Note - the 2018 sectoral budget allocation is still subject to final approval.

The 2017 and 2018 allocations are based on a no policy change basis, the current projected figures for 2017 and 2018 may look like an expenditure cut but the 2017 allocation does not take account of recent additional funding made available for safety initiatives in areas including agriculture.

The priority tasks for the HSA in relation to engagement with the farming sector for 2017 included:

- ongoing delivery of the Farm Safety Partnership Action Plan, 2016 to 2018;
- encouraging the work of 6 working groups under the above plan;
- continuing awareness campaigns through the media, events and advertising targeted at the agricultural sector;
- promotion of good health for farmers;
- publication of information sheets;
- roll out of the revised Code of Practice on farm safety;
- finalising an e-learning tool on tractor and machinery safety,
- focusing on child safety on farms through programmes at primary and post-primary school level, letters have already issued to over 3,000 such schools;
- engagement of all representative organisations and stakeholders in the challenge;
- increasing awareness of farm safety throughout the sector.

The funding allocations that the HSA makes for particular aspects of its annual programme of work, including farm safety initiatives, can fluctuate from year to year as the HSA decides how to prioritise its non-pay funding in order to implement its overall programme of work.

In 2017 the Health and Safety Authority has allocated a budget of €287,000 for farm safety prevention initiatives. These initiatives involved the development of further guidance and advice materials and the organisation of, participation in, or support of a wide range of agriculture related events such as the Farm Tractor & Machinery Trade Association, Assisting in Knowledge Transfer Group Facilitator Training, Head to Toe Mental Health Day, Farmer of the Year Awards, Farm Safety Months, (March/Livestock, May/Tractors & Machinery, November/Falls from Height & Falling Objects) , Teagasc Dairy Event, the Tullamore Show and the National Ploughing Championships.

The totality of the work of the HSA in relation to farm safety is not confined to specific farm safety initiatives or inspections. In addition to such initiatives visits to farms by inspectors include routine unannounced inspections to monitor general safety & health standards and assess compliance with the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act, 2005 and other health and safety regulations, and to investigate complaints, fatal and serious farm accidents. Typically in any one year there can be between 60 – 90 investigations on farms with the rest being unannounced inspections. In 2017 the HSA is carrying out three focused inspection campaigns each of one month duration. The first focused on “animal handling”, the second on working with “tractors & machinery” and the third on “working from heights & falling objects”.

The HSA approach of redirecting some of its inspection resources to engaging directly with farmers on other accident prevention initiatives has continued through 2016 & in 2017 particularly through the Knowledge Transfer Groups of which 98 have been attended & supported so far this year. Additionally all facilitators of knowledge transfer groups have now been trained in the essentials of occupational farm health and safety by Teagasc with the assistance of the HSA.

Electric Vehicles

96. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Finance the estimated full year cost of reducing the BIK rate on electric vehicles to 0% for each year until 2023. [50992/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am advised by Revenue that tax due as a result of benefit-in-kind is not separately declared by benefit type on employer returns, instead the total aggregated benefit-in-kind figure is declared to Revenue, therefore there is no basis for compiling the costing sought by the Deputy.

Given the relatively small numbers of electric vehicles currently registered in Ireland, and the fact that many of these are privately owned, the cost of the measure proposed is likely to be low at present. The estimated cost of the measure for 2018 for the purposes of inclusion in budgetary arithmetic is €500,000 in tax foregone.

A review of the BIK applying to motor vehicles in general is to take place in 2018. This review will include how best to implement a longer term 0% rate for electric vehicles.

Paradise Papers.

97. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Finance if papers (details supplied) were discussed at the last EU Council meeting. [47896/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Paradise Papers were discussed in the November ECOFIN meeting in the context of the EU list of non-cooperative jurisdictions for tax purposes.

There is widespread consensus in recent years that aggressive tax planning can only be prevented by all countries acting together.

Member States of the EU agreed last year to draw up a list of countries who do not live up to international best practice on tax. Criteria were agreed by Member States early in 2017 which are based on agreed international standards and also require a closer examination of zero tax jurisdictions.

At this point in time, experts from the Member States have reviewed the jurisdictions and come to a preliminary analysis. In late October, letters issued to jurisdictions informing them of the outcome of this analysis. At EU level, we are engaging with jurisdictions where issues have been identified and have obtained commitment by a number of jurisdictions to review these issues and make changes to their tax systems.

I am confident that the list can be agreed at ECOFIN on 5 December.

Stamp Duty

98. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Finance his plans to consider the conditional retention of the 2% stamp duty rate on all agricultural land transfers to preserve and encourage land mobility; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50733/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): In my Budget 2018 statement I announced an increase in the stamp duty rate for all non-residential property transactions, including agricultural land, from 2% to 6%. Based on Revenue's Post-Budget Ready Reckoner this is projected to raise around €392 million in 2018.

In my Budget statement I also announced an extension of consanguinity relief for another 3 years and that the stamp duty rate applying under that scheme would be fixed at 1%. Consanguinity relief is availed of in transferring farms to younger family members and is particularly relevant where the transferee does not qualify for an alternative relief such as Young Trained Farmer stamp duty exemption.

Following further discussions with the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine I decided that in addition to extending the period of the relief and fixing the associated stamp duty rate at 1% the age rule for the consanguinity relief will be removed. This means that it will be possible for all gifts and sales of farmlands to closely related family members, who do not qualify for the 100% exemption from stamp duty under the Young Trained Farmer scheme, to benefit from the consanguinity relief at a stamp duty rate of 1%.

The proposal outlined by the Deputy would result in a reduction in stamp duty yields which would have to be made up from other taxation measures in order to maintain overall Budget arithmetic. I am informed by Revenue that the estimated loss in yield in this case would be in the order of €32 million. The Government must consider carefully any tax changes as any reductions will have to be offset elsewhere. I have no plans to implement a special rate of stamp duty for agricultural land as suggested by the deputy.

Land Transfers

99. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Finance if the payment of a deposit on a commercial land transfer before the budget change of 11 October 2017 will be recognised as a binding contractual agreement; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50742/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The rate of stamp duty on non-residential land was increased to 6% on Budget Day, which rate applies in relation to all relevant conveyances executed after midnight on 10 October 2017. I subsequently introduced transitional measures in the Finance Bill that will allow for the lower rate of 2% to continue to apply where the parties to a contract entered into a binding contract before 11 October 2017 and where the conveyance or transfer is executed on or before 31 December 2017.

I am advised by Revenue that the payment of a deposit does not, of itself, necessarily indicate that the parties to a transaction had entered into a binding contract for the conveyance of property. If individuals are in doubt about the status of a transaction they should consult with their legal advisors to determine whether they had, in fact, entered into binding contracts before 11 October 2017 and indeed, whether the conveyances will be executed on or before 31 December 2017.

Motor Insurance Costs

100. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Finance his views on a matter (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on that matter. [50744/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As Minister for Finance, I am responsible for the development of the legal framework governing financial regulation. Neither I nor the Central Bank of Ireland can interfere in the provision or pricing of insurance products, as these matters are of a commercial nature, and are determined by insurance companies based on an assessment of the risks they are willing to accept. This position is reinforced by the EU framework for insurance which expressly prohibits Member States from adopting rules which

require insurance companies to obtain prior approval of the pricing or terms and conditions of insurance products. Consequently, I am not in a position to review individual cases as to the pricing level or terms or conditions that should be applied in those cases.

Motor insurers use a combination of rating factors in making their individual decisions on whether to offer cover and what terms to apply. My understanding is that the factors include those such as the age and type of the car, the age of the driver, the claims record, driving experience, and the number of drivers, how the car is used, etc. As all Insurers do not all use the same combination of rating factors prices can vary across the market. In addition, insurance companies will price in accordance with their own past claims experience, meaning that in relation to different factors and the availability of cover, different insurance companies will use different thresholds.

While it is appreciated that the individual, the subject of the PQ, has been unsuccessful in getting a quote from another company, it is I think still worth noting that the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission website has an informative section regarding the purchase of car insurance. One of the tips listed to help cut costs is to “shop around” and to “always get quotes from several insurance providers when you need to get or renew insurance”. A checklist for “motor insurance shopping around” is also provided.

Land Transfers

101. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Finance if a stamp duty overpayment on an inter-family farm land transfer in respect of persons (details supplied) in County Kerry will be refunded; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50771/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): There are two reliefs from the charge to Stamp Duty on inter family transfers of farm land – young trained farmer relief and consanguinity relief.

Young trained farmer relief provides a total relief from Stamp Duty, i.e. no duty is payable. I am advised by Revenue that based on the information available, the conditions for granting the young trained farmer relief did not apply in the case of the person concerned.

Consanguinity relief, for deeds of transfer signed before 11 October 2017 between related persons, reduces the amount of Stamp Duty payable by half. For deeds of transfer executed on or after 11 October, consanguinity relief reduces the rate of duty payable to 1% (instead of 6%). A number of conditions must be satisfied before the relief can be claimed.

I am advised by Revenue that in the case of the person concerned, the Stamp Duty Return made relates to a deed executed on 29 September 2017. The conditions that had to be satisfied before consanguinity relief could apply were that the person transferring the land was, at the time of transfer of the land, under 67 years of age and the person to whom the land was transferred must farm the land for at least 6 years or lease it to someone who will farm it for at least 6 years. In addition, the person farming the land must hold a specified qualification or obtain it within a period of four years from the date they get the land or spend at least 50% of their time farming land.

I am advised that based on the information available to Revenue, the conditions for granting consanguinity relief were not satisfied in this instance and that the relief was not claimed on the Stamp Duty return. There is, therefore, no overpayment of Stamp Duty and consequently no refund is due.

I should mention that while the Finance Bill 2017 abolishes the condition that the person transferring the land be under 67 years of age, this provision will only apply when the Bill becomes law and will then only apply to deeds executed on or after the date the Bill is enacted.

Tracker Mortgages

102. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Finance his views on a matter (details supplied) regarding tracker mortgages; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50772/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Central Bank has clearly set out its expectations of lenders to provide appropriate redress and compensation to affected customers in its Principles for Redress.

The Principles of Redress provide for a number of different classes of redress payments depending on the harm suffered by individual borrowers. The question of whether a tax liability arises in any given case depends on the specific issues to be redressed and the facts and circumstances of that particular case.

The Principles for Redress sets out that ‘any tax liability that impacted customers may incur as a result of the relevant issue or in respect of any redress, compensation or other payment made to impacted customers by the lender, as a result of the relevant issue, are to be discharged by the lender. The lender is to liaise directly with Revenue in this regard’. The Central Bank has advised me that this includes TRS.

Stamp Duty

103. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Finance the amount of stamp duty paid on agricultural transfers over the past five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50788/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am advised by Revenue that the amount of Stamp Duty paid on agricultural land is available for the years 2013 to 2016 and is as shown in the following table. Due to the manner in which data are recorded in Revenue systems, this information is not available for earlier years.

Year	€m
2013	9.6
2014	13.0
2015	18.1
2016	16.8

Further information in relation to Stamp Duty returns and reliefs for agricultural land is available on the revenue website at: <https://www.revenue.ie/en/corporate/documents/statistics/farmers/farming-profile-2016.pdf>.

Stamp Duty

104. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Finance the taxation measures that

will be applicable from 1 January 2018 for the transfer of farm land from a parent to a son or daughter under 35 years of age; if there are additional benefits for the potential beneficiary to have the green certificate; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50810/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am advised by Revenue that there are two potential stamp duty reliefs where a parent transfers farm land to a son or daughter.

An exemption from stamp duty is currently available where farm land is sold or transferred to ‘young trained farmers’. These are farmers who are under 35 years of age and have (or will have within a specified period following the receipt of the farm land) specified relevant educational qualifications (known as the ‘green cert’). A ‘young trained farmer’ is required to retain ownership of the farm land for a period of five years following the transfer and to actively farm the land during this period. Section 81AA Stamp Duties Consolidation Act 1999 provides for this relief.

In addition, a relief known as ‘consanguinity relief’ applies in relation to transfers of farm land between certain blood relatives, including from parents to their children. A reduced 1% rate of stamp duty applies subject to specified conditions. The recipient of the farm land must actively farm the land for a period of at least six years or have (or will have within a specified period following the receipt of the farm land) specified relevant educational qualifications. Alternatively, the farm land can be leased for at least six years to someone who satisfies either this active farming or educational qualification condition.

Consanguinity relief currently applies where the person transferring the land is under 67 years of age. There is no age limit on the recipient of the farm land. However, Finance Bill 2017 contains measures to extend this relief for a further three years until 31 December 2020 and to remove the age limit of 67 years. Both of these measures will come into effect on the enactment of the Finance Bill which I expect to happen around the end of December.

I am also advised by Revenue that a recipient of farm land could potentially avail of ‘agricultural relief’ in relation to capital acquisitions tax. The relief takes the form of a 90% reduction in the taxable value of agricultural property that is gifted or inherited. Section 89 of the Capital Acquisitions Tax Consolidation Act (CATCA) 2003 provides for this relief.

To qualify for the relief, the recipient of the gift or inheritance (the ‘beneficiary’) must first qualify as a ‘farmer’ for the purpose of section 89 CATCA 2003. This means that a beneficiary’s agricultural property must comprise at least 80% by gross market value of the beneficiary’s total property at a particular date.

In addition, a beneficiary, or a lessee where the beneficiary leases the agricultural land, must actually farm the land on a commercial basis for a period of at least six years following the gift or inheritance. The relevance of a ‘green cert’ is that the holder of such a certificate, while required to actually farm the land, is not subject to the requirement that he or she spends at least 50% of his or her normal working time doing this.

The relationship between the person who provides the gift (i.e. the disponer) and the beneficiary determines the maximum tax-free threshold known as the ‘Group threshold’ below which gift or inheritance tax does not arise. Any prior gift or inheritance received by a beneficiary since 5 December 1991 from within the same Group threshold is aggregated for the purposes of determining whether any tax is payable on the current benefit. A son or a daughter is entitled to the Group A tax-free threshold of €310,000 for the purposes of computing the tax payable on the taxable value of any gift of agricultural property.

Revenue Commissioners Data

105. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Finance the number of appeals received and processed by the Revenue Commissioners in each of the past five years from 2012 to 2016. [50847/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Tax Appeals Commission (TAC) was established and new procedures for making, processing, adjudicating and determining appeals came into effect on 21 March 2016. Before this date, taxpayers sent their appeals directly to Revenue, who then transferred appeals to the Appeal Commissioners for hearing. Since that date, taxpayers send their appeals directly to the TAC who then notify Revenue of the appeals. The TAC has full control over the processing and hearing of appeals.

I am advised by Revenue that it received 7,154 appeals for the years 2012 to 2016, whether directly from taxpayers or by notification from the TAC. All of the appeals that were received by Revenue before 21 March 2016 have either been closed or transferred to the TAC for adjudication and determination.

The table below details the number of appeals received in the years requested, the number of appeals closed in the year in which they were received and the number of appeals that have been closed in the years since then. Appeals are closed when they have either been determined by the Appeal Commissioners or the Courts, dismissed by the Appeal Commissioners, withdrawn by the appellant or settled by agreement with Revenue.

Year of appeal	Appeals Received	Closed in year	Closed in years since
2012	1,415	371	801
2013	1,381	334	692
2014	1,533	397	643
2015	1,368	369	345
2016*	1,457	297	219
Totals	7,154	1,768	2,700

*The 2016 figures in the table above include both appeals sent by taxpayers to Revenue before 21 March 2016 and appeals sent directly to the TAC after this date and subsequently notified to Revenue.

Customs and Excise Staff

106. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Finance the average cost of recruiting one additional customs revenue official. [50912/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am advised by Revenue that Revenue's Comprehensive Review of Expenditure 2014 estimated that the average cost of recruiting staff for compliance projects such as oils, tobacco and alcohol is €50,000 per annum.

Revenue is a fully integrated tax and customs administration. Staff are deployed across the full range of roles required of a modern integrated tax and customs administration, including customer service and non-compliance roles.

Revenue has been provided with additional resources to prepare to meet possible additional demands posed by the impact of the UK's exit from the EU. This includes provision to upgrade ICT systems to manage the anticipated increase in the volume of Customs transactions.

Brexit Issues

107. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Finance if he will provide a costing for the implementation of border checks on the Border with Northern Ireland in the event of a hard Brexit. [50913/17]

109. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Finance the number of Revenue Commissioner officials addressing Brexit-related tasks; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50922/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 107 and 109 together.

The precise customs arrangements that will apply after Brexit will depend on the outcome of negotiations between the EU and UK, however it is clear that political solutions must be found before technical resolutions can be applied. I am informed by Revenue that at this juncture it is not possible to assess what specific arrangements would be required if the UK left the Customs Union and Single Market or what post Brexit checks would be carried out. The Chairman of Revenue has previously confirmed that Revenue is not looking for sites for customs posts. Therefore it would be premature to consider hypothetical cost estimates.

However, I am informed by Revenue that they are actively engaged in examining a range of scenarios in order to support Ireland's Brexit objectives. This work is carried out by a significant number of staff, currently estimated as 25 full-time equivalents, of whom 12 are dedicated to Brexit work full time, supported by additional staff throughout the organisation as required.

Currency Exchange

108. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Finance the estimated impact on GDP and GNP if parity with the pound is maintained for one week; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50919/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Euro-sterling exchange rate developments have been largely driven by the uncertainty associated with Brexit over the last year or so. There was a notable appreciation of the bilateral rate in the months leading up to the vote and a further sharp appreciation following the outcome of the referendum. Since the vote, the euro has appreciated by approximately 17% against sterling and is currently trading at around €1 = stg£0.90 (as of 28th November).

The impact on GDP/GNP if parity with the pound is maintained for one week would be negligible due to inter alia currency hedging as well as fixed-price contracts.

However, the table below illustrates the estimated impact of a sustained 5% appreciation of the euro-sterling bilateral rate on a number of key macro-fiscal aggregates. It is important to stress that these results are based on the historical relationship between the euro-sterling exchange rate and other macroeconomic variables and as such are only indicative.

Most of the impact from such a shock is felt immediately with the level of GDP expected to fall by 0.6 percentage points in the first year relative to baseline with adverse impacts on the deficit and debt ratios. Overall, the level of output would be 0.5% lower over the medium-term relative to baseline. This, in turn, would worsen the deficit path with the effect declining to 0.2 percentage points after 6 years.

The margin of error on scaled estimates is likely to be significant as the impact from exchange rate appreciation is likely to be non-linear.

5 per cent euro-sterling appreciation

		T	T+1	T+2	T+3	T+4	T+5
Real GDP	% change compared to base	-0.6	-0.8	-1.0	-0.9	-0.8	-0.5
Deficit-GDP ratio	pp change compared to base	0.4	0.7	0.6	0.5	0.4	0.2
Debt-GDP ratio	pp change compared to base	2.8	3.6	4.2	4.3	4.1	3.5

Source: ESRI, based on HERMES model estimates as published in Stability Programme Update 2016 (SPU 2016 page 27)

As we cannot control the international environment or exchange rate developments, it is crucially important that continued competitiveness improvements are achieved, including by focussing on costs we can control and by boosting our productivity. Ensuring a sustainable path for the public finances is also of fundamental importance.

In that context, on the fiscal side the Government has continued its policy focus of enhancing the resilience of our public finances to any Brexit-related shock. Specifically, it is projected that Ireland will achieve its medium-term budgetary objective of a balanced budget next year. Linked to this, over the forecast horizon, it is projected that the Debt-to-GDP ratio will continue on a downward trajectory, reaching the Stability and Growth Pact (SGP) 60 per cent threshold in the early part of the next decade and continuing to improve thereafter.

Whilst not complacent to potential challenges, including our currently elevated debt level, these developments will help provide fiscal capacity in the event of Brexit. Complementing this, Budget 2018 established the ‘Rainy Day Fund’, which provides a further counter-cyclical buffer, and represents an important measure to strengthen the shock absorption capacity of the national finances to such external risks.

Budget 2018 also announced further measures to prepare Ireland’s economy for the significant challenges ahead. These measures include:

- a doubling of capital investment between 2015 to 2021 - boosting the growth potential of the economy
- improving the competitiveness of our personal tax system - through income tax reform
- introducing a Key Employment Engagement Programme (KEEP) – a new incentive to attract key employees
- a new €300 million Loan Guarantee Scheme for Brexit-impacted business and a complementary €25 million Agriculture Brexit Loan Scheme – targeted at enhancing the competitiveness of the businesses most exposed to Brexit
- the retention of the 9% VAT rate in the hospitality sector to reduce the impact of currency

volatility in the wake of the UK's decision

- the doubling of additional Brexit-related staff in state agencies.

The Government also continues to encourage businesses to make contact with their Local Enterprise Office, Bord Bia or Enterprise Ireland for free services to help them build a plan for Brexit. The enterprise agencies will work with companies, helping them to deal with Brexit - making them more competitive, diversifying market exposure, and up-skilling teams.

Furthermore, the Government will also exploit fully any opportunities that arise. The Government will continue through the IDA to promote the attractiveness of Ireland as a location of choice for companies and talented people who are looking to establish or expand operations in what will be the only native English-speaking country within the EU and the Eurozone.

Question No. 109 answered with Question No. 107.

International Relations

110. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Finance the estimated cost of doubling the footprint of Enterprise Ireland, the IDA, Bord Bia, Irish embassies and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in the EU 26, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50926/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Identifying the resources required for each of the bodies referred to in order to carry out their roles effectively is a matter for the relevant Ministers and Departments. Officials in the Department of Finance have not prepared any cost estimates based on doubling their footprints within the EU. I expect that any relevant Department and agency which, after appropriate policy analysis, determines that a change in its level of international representation is required, will carry out a costing exercise and seek altered levels of funding in a future estimates process.

Housing Issues

111. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Finance his plans to improve housing financing structures for new housing, in particular the NTMA, to small and medium builders and the builders of apartments; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40358/17]

112. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Finance when Home Building Finance Ireland will be established; the funds that have been allocated to it to date; the projects it will deliver; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47232/17]

113. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Finance the estimated number of new housing units that will be built under Home Building Finance Ireland (HBFI); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47335/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 111 to 113, inclusive, together.

As announced in my Budget speech on 10 October 2017, it is my intention to establish Home Building Finance Ireland (HBFI) to provide funding on market terms to viable residential development projects which are experiencing difficulty in obtaining debt funding. HBFI will be a standalone entity which will provide funding directly into the market. As the Deputy

will be aware, the State is already providing a number of alternative supports into this market, including equity finance, through the Irish Strategic Investment Fund's (ISIF) existing residential development funding platforms.

I would be hopeful of bringing the establishing legislation to the Houses of the Oireachtas for approval in early 2018, with a view to HBFI commencing operations later in 2018. It is not expected that HBFI will have an indefinite lifespan but it is too early to speculate on how long it may operate as this will depend on the availability of funding in the market to meet demand for homes in the coming years.

With a proposed allocation of up to €750m, it is estimated that HBFI could have capacity to fund about 6,000 homes in the coming years. The current estimated shortfall in residential supply is 15,000 – 20,000 units per annum and, accordingly, HBFI, with an annual average delivery of 2,000 homes, would reduce this shortfall by about 10% (assuming a three year horizon). This would be a significant contribution but it would not make HBFI a dominant player in the residential funding market and it would clearly leave room for banks and other finance providers to increase their contribution to funding much-needed residential development.

In relation to the products that will be offered by HBFI, the fund will be designed to focus on the provision of debt funding to viable residential development projects. HBFI will not be directly involved in development – its role would be solely as a commercial lender and therefore will not have any role in designing the schemes it funds. HBFI will provide lending on commercial, market-equivalent terms and conditions. This approach would be akin to a bank or private equity investor. As such HBFI will not have targets in relation to social or affordable housing but will provide a significant contribution to supporting the delivery of additional supply of all types of residential housing in the coming years.

Employment Investment Incentive Scheme

114. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Finance the cost of adapting the employment and investment incentive (details supplied), in tabular form. [50947/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am informed by Revenue that based on 2016 data, the latest year for which data are available, the estimated cost to the Exchequer from increasing the current allowable tax relief cap of €150,000 available to an individual investor under the EII scheme in the manner described by the Deputy is set out in the following table.

EII Relief Cap	Cost - € Million
€200,000	0.9
€300,000	2.2
€400,000	2.9
€500,000	3.4
€600,000	3.8
€700,000	4.2
€800,000	4.5
€900,000	4.8
€1M	5.0
€1.1M	5.2
€1.2M	5.3

EII Relief Cap	Cost - € Million
€1.3M	5.4

This costing assumes a maximum relief of 30% and does not allow for the additional 10% relief that is currently available under this scheme after a period of 4 years from the initial investment.

It may also be of interest to the Deputy that a report on the Employment and Investment Incentive (EII) scheme is available on the Revenue website at: <https://www.revenue.ie/en/corporate/information-about-revenue/statistics/tax-expenditures/eii.aspx>.

This report provides EII statistics regarding qualifying companies, investors, investment amounts and also Exchequer costs. The report covers the years from 2012, the year in which the scheme was first introduced, to 2016, the latest year for which data is available.

Vehicle Registration Data

115. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Finance the cost of extending a vehicle registration tax, VRT, rebate to electric vehicles only for each of the years up to 2023. [50962/17]

116. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Finance the cost of extending a vehicle registration tax, VRT, rebate to electric and hybrid vehicles for each of the years up to 2023. [50963/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 115 and 116 together.

I am informed by Revenue that the cost of the Vehicle Registration Tax (VRT) rebate for electric vehicles and hybrid vehicles in 2017 is estimated at €5 million and €10 million respectively, giving a total estimated cost of €15 million for the year.

Revenue does not have information to enable it provide an accurate forecast of the future growth of electric and hybrid vehicles. As such it is not possible to determine the cost of extending the VRT rebate to electric and hybrid vehicles out to 2023.

Departmental Correspondence

117. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Finance if all correspondence between the European Commission and his Department regarding a case (details supplied) will be published; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51177/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): On 30 August 2016, it was announced that the Commission had issued a negative decision in the Apple State Aid case. This concluded the investigation that had been on-going formally since June 2014.

Ireland has never accepted the Commission's analysis in the Apple State aid Decision. However, we have always been clear that the Government is fully committed to ensuring that recovery of the alleged Apple State aid takes place without delay and has committed significant resources to ensuring this is achieved as quickly as possible whilst ensuring that the interests of the Irish taxpayer are adequately protected.

In this regard, Irish officials and experts have been engaged in intensive work to ensure that the State complies with all its recovery obligations as soon as possible, and have been in constant contact with the European Commission on all aspects of this process for over a year.

It is not appropriate for me to discuss or publish the nature of the correspondence between Ireland and the European Commission relating to the investigation or the recovery process, as such correspondence is confidential between Ireland and the European Commission.

Finally, the Government profoundly disagrees with the European Commission's analysis in the Apple State aid case. As this is the subject of open legal proceedings, it will not be possible to comment further in this regard.

Garda Station Closures

118. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the costs associated with Garda stations that remain closed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51105/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran): The information requested is being collated and a response will issue directly to the Deputy in the coming days.

Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management Programme

119. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the outcome of discussions regarding catchment flood risk assessment and management, CFRAM, and the need to introduce measures to deal with flooding in the Ballybay area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50811/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran): The core strategy for addressing areas at potentially significant risk from flooding is the Office of Public Works (OPW) Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) Programme. The Programme, which is being undertaken by engineering consultants on behalf of the OPW working in partnership with the local authorities, involves the production of predictive flood mapping for each location, the development of preliminary flood risk management options and the publication of Flood Risk Management Plans.

These final Plans are currently undergoing an independent review of the strategic level environmental assessments by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. Once this independent review of all Plans is completed and observations addressed, I would hope by the end of this year or early 2018, to seek the approval from the Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform for the 29 Flood Risk Management Plans developed under the CFRAM process.

Thereafter, I would hope to announce the proposed structural measures contained within those Plans that will, over the coming years, be taken, through a prioritised approach, to detailed design to protect those communities at assessed risk.

The preferred measure for Ballybay published in the draft Plans in 2016 consisted of a series of flood embankments and walls. These hard defences will extend for a total length of 2.5km with an average height of 1.6m. If approved, as part of the final Plans this option will provide protection to approximately 61 properties at risk of fluvial flooding. Approval for proposed

schemes in the Plans, allows for their progression to detailed design, further environmental assessments and public consultation.

Community Employment Schemes Supervisors

120. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the status of the provision of a pension for community employment scheme supervisors; the actions taken by him to resolve this issue; if he will report on the meetings held by the high-level forum since it was established to resolve this issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50859/17]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): At the April meeting of the Community Sector High Level Forum, my Department outlined its intention to conduct a detailed scoping exercise in order to comprehensively examine and assess the full potential implications of the issues under consideration. In considering the particular matter referred to, regard must be had to the costs and precedent of such an arrangement were one to be created.

It continues to be the position that state organisations are not the employer of the particular employees concerned and that it is not possible for the State to provide funding for such a scheme. The employees in question are, or were, employees of private companies notwithstanding the fact that the companies concerned are, or were, reliant on State funding. In considering the matter, regard must be had to costs and the precedent of such an arrangement were one to be created given that the individuals employed in that sector are not employed by the State, even if many of the services they provide are funded by the State.

A meeting of the Forum took place last Thursday, 23 November, at which the findings of the scoping exercise were shared with members of the Forum. A following meeting to deal with technical questions arising from the exercise will be arranged in the coming weeks.

Public Sector Staff Data

121. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the names of persons that serve on the high level appointments commission for the Civil Service; the length of time that each one has served on the commission; the number of appointments made since its inception; his plans for reform of this commission; his further plans to replace members of the commission; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50891/17]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As the Deputy will be aware, open publicly advertised competition is a key principle of senior level appointments to posts across the public service reflecting the Government’s commitment to ensure that such posts, which are central to the effective performance of our system of public administration, are filled by high-calibre candidates.

In my area of direct responsibility, the civil service, recruitment in relation to senior level appointments above Principal Officer is undertaken by the Top Level Appointments Committee, (TLAC). TLAC holds competitions for and advises, as appropriate, Ministers and/or the Government on appointments to civil service posts at Secretary General and Assistant Secretary and equivalent levels.

The policy on open competitions for Assistant Secretary and Deputy Secretary and equivalent posts has been in place since 2007 and for Secretary General and equivalent posts since

2012.

TLAC operates under the Code of Practice issued by the Commission for Public Service Appointments in accordance with the principles of merit, consistency, accountability, probity, best practice and professional confidentiality.

TLAC operates in an independent manner and strictly on the basis of open competition and merit and is responsible for determining its own procedures and remit, subject to Government decisions as appropriate.

In 2011 the Government agreed to a restructuring of TLAC so that the membership should comprise:

- Secretary General, Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.
- Secretary General to the Government.
- Two other Secretaries General appointed for three year terms.
- Five members from outside the civil service appointed for three year terms, one of whom would be the chairperson.

In July 2015 the Government approved the further expansion to seven external members (including the Chairperson) and six internal members.

The current members of TLAC are:

- Mr Robert Watt, Secretary General, D/Public Expenditure & Reform - ex-officio member since - April 2011.
- Mr Martin Fraser, Secretary General, D/Taoiseach – ex-officio member since - July 2011.
- Mr Maurice Quinn, Secretary General, D/Defence – Internal TLAC Member since - 01 September 2015 – 3 yr term due to end - 01 September 2018.
- Mr Jim Breslin, Secretary General, D/Health – Internal TLAC Member since - 01 September 2015 – 3yr term due to end - 01 September 2018.
- Ms Brid Horan, Non-Executive Director – External TLAC Members since - 01 September 2015 – 3yr term due to end - 01 September 2018.
- Mr Charles Dolan, Director, Consulting Ltd – External TLAC Member since - 01 September 2015 – 3yr term due to end - 01 September 2018.
- Mr Tony Keohane, Former Chairman, Tesco Ltd – External TLAC Member since - 01 September 2015 – 3yr term due to end - 01 September 2018.
- Ms Jane Williams, Managing Partner/Sia Partners – Chairwoman of TLAC since - 08 November 2016 – 3yr term due to end - 08 November 2019. Previous to being appointed Chairwoman, was an External TLAC Member since - 5 Nov 2013.
- Ms Bride Rosney, Former special advisor to President Mary Robinson – External TLAC Member since - 15 November 2016 – 3yr term due to end - 15 November 2019.
- Mr Phillip Matthews, Qualified Executive and Team Coach and former President/CEO and Board Member, National College of Ireland – External TLAC Member since - 15 November 2016 – 3yr term due to end - 15 November 2019.

- Mr Conor Brady, Former Editor, Irish Times and former Member of GSOC – External TLAC Member since - 15 November 2016 – 3yr term due to end - 15 November 2019.

- Mr Mark Griffin, Secretary General, D/Communications, Climate Action & Environment – Internal TLAC Member since - 06 December 2016 – 3yr term due to end - 06 December 2019.

- Dr Orlaigh Quinn, Secretary General, D/Business, Enterprise & Innovation – Internal TLAC Member since - 01 August 2017 - 3yr term due to end - 01 August 2020.

Since TLAC's inception in 1984, in the region of 615 appointments have been made.

Momentum Programme

122. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the expenditure on the momentum programme; the estimated cost of increasing the number of places on the programme by 20%; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50910/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan): The Momentum programme was created in 2012 during the economic downturn to address the needs of long term unemployed and young unemployed individuals. It funded the provision of free education and training projects to support over 12,500 jobseekers (who had been unemployed for twelve months or more) to gain skills and access employment opportunities in growing sectors of the economy.

It was delivered through two programme iterations. The first (Momentum I) ran over the period 2012-2014, and the second (Momentum II) commenced in 2014 and concluded earlier this year. Momentum I cost in the order of €17m and Momentum II cost almost €19m. The cost of another round of Momentum with 20% greater numbers than Momentum II would be €22.8 million. It is likely that this total cost would be spread over more than a single year.

Given the overall improvement in the economic position, the welcome decline in the numbers who are unemployed and the consequent reduction in demand for training, there are no plans for a further round of the Momentum programme and participants are not currently being recruited.

Independent evaluations of both programmes have been carried out and published and are available on the SOLAS website at www.solas.ie

School Accommodation Provision

123. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the funding that has been made available for a school project (details supplied) to be completed in view of the fact that the current junior cycle students will have to continue their studies from fourth year on in temporary structures; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50736/17]

127. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his attention has been drawn to a school project (details supplied) that is at capacity in the context of physical space; his plans to rectify this for the 2018/2019 year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50774/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 123 and 127 together.

The Deputy will be aware that a building project for the school to which she refers is included on my Department's 6 Year Capital Programme. The project, which will provide a new permanent school building, has been devolved to Kildare Wicklow Education and Training Board for delivery. I understand that planning permission has been secured and that the Stage 2B documents are substantially complete and are due to be submitted to my Department shortly.

I also wish to advise the Deputy that the school recently submitted an application for additional interim accommodation pending the construction of the new school building. The application will be considered and a decision will be conveyed to the school authority as soon as the assessment process has been completed.

Special Educational Needs Service Provision

124. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he has assessed the need for an autism spectrum disorder specific special school in the Dublin 15 area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50752/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I wish to advise the Deputy that new schools are established to meet demographic demand. In general, the Department's policy is to integrate children with special educational needs into the mainstream school system wherever possible. Many of our schools have special education classes included within them. However, Special Schools are also necessary to meet the educational needs of pupils whose needs cannot be adequately catered for in a mainstream school.

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) Policy Advice recommends that special schools should be designated and resourced to serve those pupils within the community who require special school placement rather than be limited to any specific category of disability, such as ASD. Many special schools now enrol students from disability categories other than from those provided for by their school designations.

The need to establish a new special school would normally be first identified by the National Council for Special Education in conjunction with my Department when they identify gaps in special needs provision in a given area.

There are 37 Special Schools in Dublin city and county. The NCSE has advised my Department that there is an emerging need for additional Special School placement options in the North Dublin area. My Department continues to work with the NCSE to ensure that there is appropriate planning in place to ensure that all children who require special school placements can access such placements.

Home Tuition Scheme

125. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of students in receipt of the home tuition grant in the Dublin 15 area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50753/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The purpose of the Home Tuition Grant Scheme is to provide a compensatory educational service for

(a) Early educational intervention for children with autism who meet the scheme's eligibility criteria

(b) Students with special educational needs seeking an educational placement in a recognized school

(c) Students enrolled in schools, with a significant medical condition which has caused, and is likely to continue to cause, major disruption to their attendance.

The preferred approach is that children are educated in school settings where children may have access to fully qualified teachers, individualised education programmes, special needs assistants, school curriculum with the option, where possible and appropriate, of full or partial integration and interaction with other pupils. Accordingly, Home Tuition is provided as an interim measure only for children for whom a placement in a recognised school is not available and should not be regarded as an optional alternative to a school placement.

Approximately 56 children, in the area referred to by the Deputy, were sanctioned Home Tuition for the 2017/2018 school under the above strands of the scheme.

Details of the Home Tuition Grant Scheme are available on the Department's website at www.education.ie.

Departmental Properties

126. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of a school (details supplied); if it is to be transferred to the responsibility of the City of Dublin Education Training Board; if so, when this will occur; if educational courses for persons with either physical or intellectual disabilities will be provided there; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50754/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The site on which the college in question is currently situated has been purchased and transferred to my ownership. Subject to planning permission, it is planned to provide a primary school and a post primary school on the site.

The college in question is operated by the National Learning Network, a division of the Rehab group, with funding provided by City of Dublin Education and Training Board. The funding is provided under the Specialist Training Provider programme, which supports the provision of training for people with disabilities. With regard to the current site, there is a licence agreement in place which provides for the continued provision of existing services pending alternative arrangements being put in place by the college. There are no plans to transfer the site in question or the college to CDETB.

Question No. 127 answered with Question No. 123.

Schools Establishment

128. **Deputy Pat Buckley** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to open an Educate Together national school in the Fermoy area of Cork. [50787/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): As the Deputy may be aware, the report of the Advisory Group to the Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector recommended that demand for patronage diversity should be met in areas of stable population by divesting patronage of existing schools where there is evidence of parental demand for change. Following surveys conducted by my Department in areas of stable popula-

tion, sufficient demand emerged in 28 areas, including the Fermoy area. Under this patronage divesting process, ten new schools have opened from 2013 to 2016.

As the Deputy may be aware following discussions on patronage divesting with education stakeholders and patron bodies in 2016, on the 30th January 2017, I announced new plans aimed at providing more multi-denominational and non-denominational schools across the country, in line with the choices of parents, families and school communities and the Programme for Government commitment in this area. I believe that the new schools reconfiguration for diversity process has the potential to significantly increase patron diversity in our school system with a target of reaching 400 multi-denominational and non-denominational schools by 2030.

In tandem with the implementation of the schools reconfiguration process, my Department is continuing to work with the main stakeholders to progress delivery of diversity in the areas already identified, including Fermoy.

Schools Administration

129. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if has guidelines or regulations in place setting out the standards for cleanliness and hygiene which primary schools must meet, for example around toilet facilities and eating areas for school pupils; if so, if these guidelines are publically available on his Department's website; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50809/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Under the provisions of the Education Act, 1998 the Board of Management is responsible for the day to day running of a school. Matters such as cleanliness and hygiene in schools should be addressed by Boards of Management in accordance with relevant health and safety guidelines.

The body which has statutory responsibility for ensuring that health and safety requirements are met by all employers, including schools, is the Health and Safety Authority (HSA). The Authority also provides information and advice to organisations, including schools, to assist them in ensuring that their responsibilities in respect of health and safety in the workplace are met.

The Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 sets out the responsibilities on individual school management authorities to have a safety statement in place in their schools. The Statement should identify potential hazards, assess the risks to health and safety and put appropriate provision in place to safeguard the safety and health of employees and pupils.

The HSA has published a number of resources specifically for schools to support them in managing health and safety in the school environment. It also provides a number of online training courses specifically for the school sector. Further details on the advice, resources and training courses available from the HSA can be obtained from the HSA's website www.hsa.ie.

Schools Building Projects Status

130. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when tenders will be invited for a new school (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50836/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The building project referred to by the Deputy is for a new 24 classroom school including a Special Needs Unit, with a floor area of approx. 4,748m².

The project is currently at Stage 2B of Architectural Planning - Detailed Design Stage, which includes applications for all statutory consents, including Planning Permission, Disability Access Certificate and Fire Safety Certificate and also the preparation of tender documentation. Planning Permission for this project was received in August of this year.

The Stage 2B report has just recently been received by my Department. Once the Stage 2B submission has been reviewed, my Department will then revert to the school with regard to a timeframe for progression to tender.

Education and Training Boards

131. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if the Kildare and Wicklow Education and Training Board has concluded its examination of options for accommodation for a new school (details supplied) in Maynooth, County Kildare; if not, when the examination will be concluded; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50837/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Kildare and Wicklow Education and Training Board is continuing to examine the options for accommodation for the school referred to by the Deputy which involves consideration of the timing and availability of appropriate infrastructure in the area. My Department is continuing to work closely with Kildare and Wicklow Education and Training Board and An Foras Pátrúnachta in relation to the provision of appropriate accommodation for the establishment of the Gaelcholáiste.

Schools Building Projects

132. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reasons his officials have not yet communicated with the board of management of a school (details supplied) in County Kildare as to whether the school is to be a totally new build school project or a refurbishment project; when the position will be clarified; when a design team will be appointed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50838/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): As the Deputy is aware, a building project for the school referred to is included in my Department's 6 Year Construction Programme.

A site visit to the school has since been undertaken by my Department which involved an assessment of the school building. The outcome of the visit is currently being considered and this will assist in determining how the accommodation needs of the school will be addressed. This includes the formulation of the accommodation brief i.e. defining the extent of extension / refurbishment to be provided. My Department has been liaising with the school's Patron in this regard. When the brief formulation process has been completed, my Department will be in further contact with the Patron in relation to the next steps to be taken to initiate the architectural planning process for the project.

Schools Building Projects Status

133. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he has completed the schedule of accommodation requirements for the extension to a school (details supplied) in County Kildare; if completed, the accommodation requirements agreed; if not, when the schedule will be completed; when a design team will be appointed for the project; and if he will make

a statement on the matter. [50839/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Deputy will be aware that a building project for the school in question is included in my Department's 6 Year Construction Programme.

Following the site visit to the school by my Department, the preliminary work associated with the project has been initiated. This includes determining how the accommodation needs of the school will be met and this process is in train. My Department will be in further contact with the school patron when this process has been completed.

Schools Building Projects Status

134. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if the invitation to tender for a new school (details supplied) in County Kildare has been sanctioned; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50841/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Design Team for the major building project for the school in question submitted the original Stage 2B Report in August of this year and my Department found a number of omissions in this report. The original report was returned to the Design Team via the Board of Management for updating.

An amended Stage 2B report has recently been received and is currently being reviewed by my Department.

On completion of the review of this report, my Department will revert to the Board of Management with regard to the further progression of the project at that time.

Schools Building Projects Status

135. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if the stage 2B documents including tender documents for a new school (details supplied) in County Kildare have been submitted to his Department for approval; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50842/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The project referred to by the Deputy has been devolved for delivery to Kildare and Wicklow Education and Training Board (ETB).

My Department has not received the Stage 2B documents. I understand from the ETB that they will be submitted shortly.

Schools Building Projects Status

136. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if the invitation to tender for a new school (details supplied) in County Kildare has been sanctioned; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50843/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Design Team for the major building project for the school in question submitted the original Stage 2b Report in September of this year and my Department found omissions in this report. The original report was

returned to the Design Team via the Board of Management for updating.

An amended Stage 2B report has recently been received and this is currently being reviewed by my Department.

On completion of the review of this report my Department will revert to the Board of Management with regard to the further progression of the project at that time.

Apprenticeship Data

137. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the funding allocated in 2018 for all craft based and consortia led apprenticeships from the national training fund and the Exchequer; the number of persons forecasted to be in craft based and consortia apprenticeships by the end of 2018. [50928/17]

138. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the spend on apprenticeship training in 2016 and 2017; the craft based and consortia apprenticeship population in 2016 and to date in 2017; the number of male and female apprentices in training by each employment sector and sub sector in 2016 and to date in 2017 for craft based and consortia led apprenticeships, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50929/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 137 and 138 together.

The 2018 budget allocation for apprenticeship training is €122m which represents an increase of almost 24% on the 2017 allocation of €98.7m. The 2018 allocation will support an apprenticeship population in the region of 13,000 by the end of 2017 and the new registrations which are targeted, under the Government's Apprenticeship and Traineeship Plan, to reach over 6,000 during 2018. In 2018 all funding for craft based and consortia led apprenticeships will be provided from the National Training Fund. The total expenditure on apprenticeship training was €69.6m in 2016 and is €69m to end October in 2017.

The information requested by the Deputy in relation to the craft based and consortia apprenticeship population in 2016 and to date in 2017 is set out in the attached table.

Apprentice Population 2015 - 2016 by Sector, Trade and Gender

Population at end: October 2017	2016			Oct 2017 YTD		
	Female	Male	Grand Total	Female	Male	Grand Total
Construction Total	6	2,267	2,273	5	2,745	2,750
Brick and Stonelaying		87	87		114	114
Cabinet Making		3	3		2	2
Carpentry and Joinery	1	888	889	2	1,081	1,083
Floor and Wall Tiling						-
Painting and Decorating	1	52	53	1	78	79
Plastering		39	39		62	62
Plumbing	2	1,045	1,047	1	1,223	1,224

Questions - Written Answers

Population at end: October 2017				2016				Oct 2017 YTD
Stonecutting and Stonemasonry			27	27			33	33
Wood Manufacturing and Finishing		2	126	128		1	152	153
Electrical Total		19	4,172	4,191		25	5,231	5,256
Aircraft Mechanics			143	143		3	164	167
Electrical		16	3,422	3,438		18	4,308	4,326
Electrical Instrumentation		1	265	266		2	297	299
Electronic Security Systems			62	62		1	114	115
Industrial Electrical Eng			12	12			31	31
Instrumentation		1	28	29		1	41	42
Refrigeration		1	240	241			276	276
Engineering Total		1	1,646	1,647		7	1,801	1,808
Farriery			15	15			18	18
Industrial Insulation			30	30			41	41
Manufacturing Engineering (Level 6)						1	30	31
Manufacturing Engineering (Level 7)						3	16	19
M.A.M.F.			575	575		1	592	593
Metal Fabrication			626	626		1	650	651
Pipefitting		1	60	61		1	76	77
Polymer Processing Tech							22	22
Sheet Metalworking			96	96			116	116
Toolmaking			244	244			240	240
Financial Total		27	40	67		90	117	207
Accounting Technician						29	22	51
Insurance Practice		27	40	67		54	88	142
International Financial Services Associate						1	1	2

Population at end: October 2017				2016				Oct 2017 YTD
International Financial Services Specialist						6	6	12
Hospitality Total						6	11	17
Commis Chef						6	11	17
Motor Total		6	2,242	2,248		6	2,344	2,350
Agricultural Mechanics			148	148			148	148
Construction Plant Fitting			213	213			241	241
Heavy Vehicle Mechanics			470	470			516	516
Motor Mechanics		6	1,256	1,262		5	1,279	1,284
Vehicle Body Repairs			155	155		1	160	161
Printing & Paper Total		1	18	19		1	17	18
Print Media		1	18	19		1	17	18
Grand Total		60	10,385	10,445		140	12,266	12,406

School Textbooks

139. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if charging for primary school books (details supplied) is in keeping with article 42.4 of the Constitution; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50957/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): School book rental schemes have an important role to play in reducing the cost of school books for parents. Circa. 95% of primary schools and 65% of post-primary schools operate a book rental scheme.

My Department supports the operation of book rental schemes through the funding provided under its school books grant scheme. Under this scheme, my Department provides funding of €16million annually to all recognised primary and post-primary schools in the free education scheme. In addition €15.7 million seed capital was provided over three years to support the establishment of book rental schemes in primary schools.

One of the actions as part of the Action Plan for Education is to strengthen the focus on reducing school costs for parents by increasing the financial support for book rental schemes, in order to reduce/eliminate school book costs for parents as resources permit.

Providing additional funding for book rental schemes will be addressed during the lifetime of the Action Plan for Education.

It is a matter for the Board of Management of each individual school to decide on its own policy in relation to the use of textbooks in the school. Individual schools should adopt a cost-

conscious approach to the selection of books in their classes. My Department has published a circular to school authorities and ETBs regarding measures to be adopted by schools to reduce the costs which include the provision of a book rental scheme. The circular can be accessed on my Department's website at https://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/cl0032_2017.pdf

Minor Works Scheme

140. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when the minor works grant will be paid to primary schools (details supplied); if he will consider placing such grants on a fixed schedule along side capitation and ancillary services grants; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50958/17]

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 as funding permits.

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".

Schools Building Projects Applications

141. **Deputy Mick Barry** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a school (details supplied) can be included on the school build programme for a new build on a locally identified site in view of the rapid expansion in numbers at the school since 2013 and the condition of the current building. [51113/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I can confirm that my Department received a major capital application from the school to which the Deputy refers for the development of a new school building.

A project for the school has not been included in my Department's 6 Year Construction Programme and it is, therefore, not possible to provide an indicative timeframe for the delivery of a major project for the school at this time.

However, my Department has recently granted approval to the school for the provision of additional rented accommodation to facilitate the appointment of a developing teaching post.

Pupil-Teacher Ratio

142. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated full year cost of implementing a one point reduction in average class size at primary level; and the estimated full year cost for reducing the average class size to 23 pupils. [51115/17]

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 also includes an appeals mechanism for schools to submit an appeal under certain criteria to an independent Appeals Board.

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

Budget 2018 includes a further one point improvement in the staffing schedule in primary schools which brings the position to the most favourable ever seen at primary level. This measure will further assist all schools at the upper end of their individual respective bands. This budget measure delivers on a commitment made in the Confidence and Supply Agreement and Programme for Government to reduce primary schools class size.

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

Each 1 point adjustment to the primary staffing schedule is estimated to cost in the region of €16.5m per annum.

Pupil-Teacher Ratio

143. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated full year cost of implementing a one point reduction in the average class size at post primary level. [51116/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Teacher allocations to all schools are approved annually by my Department in accordance with established rules based on recognised pupil enrolment. The criteria for the allocation of posts are communicated to school managements annually and are available on the Department website.

Each 1 point adjustment to the pupil teacher ratio at post primary level is estimated to cost in the region of €63m per annum.

School Staff

144. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated full year cost of fully restoring the staffing schedule for retaining and gaining a teacher that applied for schools before 2012 for three, four and five teacher schools. [51117/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Budget 2018 marked the second year of major reinvestment in the education sector, as we continue to implement the Action Plan for Education, which has the central aim to make the Irish Education and training service the best in Europe within a decade.

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 criteria used for the allocation of teachers to primary schools is published annually on the website of the Department of Education and Skills. 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.

Following a review of the staffing allocation for Small Primary Schools, Budget 2017 announced two adjustments in relation to one teacher schools. Where the school is the sole primary school on an island the school will be able to appoint a second teacher. In relation to single teacher schools generally with an enrolment of 15 or more pupils the school can apply to the staffing appeal board for a second post where the single teacher has children across 6 or more class groups. The detailed arrangements have been set out in the staffing schedule circular for the 2017/18 school year.

The cost of restoring the 2011/12 staffing schedule for small schools would be approximately €5m.

Capitation Grants

145. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated full year cost of restoring capitation grants to primary schools to pre 2010 levels; and the estimated full year cost of a 10% increase in the capitation grant to primary schools. [51118/17]

149. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated full year cost of restoring capitation and related grants to primary and post primary schools to pre 2011 levels. [51123/17]

151. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated full year cost of a 20% increase per annum in the per capita capitation to voluntary secondary schools; and the estimated full year cost of a 10% increase in the capitation to community and comprehensive schools. [51125/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 145, 149 and 151 together.

The estimated cost of increasing the rate of capitation by 20% in voluntary secondary schools is circa €10.3m.

The estimated cost of increasing the rate of capitation by 10% to community and comprehensive schools is circa €1.6m.

The estimated cost of increasing the rate of capitation in primary schools by 10% is circa €9.9m.

The estimated cost of restoring capitation in primary schools to pre-2010 levels is circa €17.3m.

The overall cost of restoring capitation grants in primary and post-primary schools to pre-2010 levels is circa €35m.

I do recognise the need to improve capitation funding for primary and post-primary schools having regard to the reductions that were necessary over recent years.

Budget 2018 marks the second year of major reinvestment in the education sector, as we continue to implement the Action Plan for Education, which has the central aim to make the Irish Education and Training service the best in Europe within a decade. In 2018, the budget for the Department of Education will increase by €554 million to over €10 billion.

Due to the many competing demands for the available funding it was not possible to make progress in Budget 2018 on restoring capitation funding to schools. Capitation funding remains

a priority for me to address as part of the Action Plan.

The process is underway for restoring grant funding that is used by schools to fund the salaries of ancillary staff. The ancillary grant was increased by €6 in 2016 and €5 in 2017 in order to enable primary schools implement the arbitration salary increase for grant funded school secretaries and caretakers and to also implement the restoration of salary for cleaners arising from the unwinding of FEMPI legislation. A similar type approach in relation to improvements in grant funding was applied, as appropriate, at post-primary level.

School Staff

146. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated full year cost of providing schools with one administration day per week for teaching principals to cover the establishment of a permanent pool of teachers to replace teaching principals on their administration day. [51119/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Circular 12/2016, which is available on the Department website, outlines the number of days that teaching principals may take as release time in a school year in order to assist them fulfilling their principal duties. Under these arrangements my Department pays for a substitute teacher to be employed by a school to facilitate administrative functions to be undertaken by the teaching principal. Under the current arrangements the number of days that principal teachers may take as release time in each school year ranges between 15 and 25 days depending on the size of the school.

Building on measures in previous budgets to enhance school leadership, Budget 2018 made €0.4 million available to fund additional release days for teaching principals in primary schools. This additional funding will see an increase in the number of release days available to teaching principals in the 2018/19 school year.

Enabling teaching principals to have one release day per week would cost approximately €12 million per annum.

National Educational Psychological Service Staff

147. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated full year cost of employing an additional 100 new NEPS psychologists. [51120/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I can inform the Deputy that the direct annual cost of employing an additional 100 NEPS psychologists would be an estimated €7.3m.

Special Educational Needs Staff

148. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated full year cost of restoring temporary English as an additional language post to pre-2012 levels. [51122/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I wish to advise the Deputy that DES Circular 0013/2017 for primary schools and 0014/2017 for post primary schools were published on 7th March 2017.

These Circulars set out the details of the new model for allocating special education teachers to schools.

The new Special Education Teaching allocation provides a single unified allocation for special educational support teaching needs to each school, based on each school's educational profile and also encompasses the Language Support (EAL) allocation that schools were allocated in previous years.

Under the new allocation model, schools have been provided with a total allocation for special education needs support based on their school profile.

The provision of a profiled allocation is designed to give a fairer allocation for each school which recognises that all schools need an allocation for special needs support including language support but which provides a graduated allocation which takes into account the actual level of need in each school.

Under the new allocation model, schools are frontloaded with resources, based on each school's profile, to provide supports immediately to those pupils who need it without delay.

It should be noted that this is a brand new model of allocation and is not comparable to the previous model. By using a broad range of attainment and socio-economic criteria, it is expected that generally, a school's profile will remain relatively constant from year to year. Each year, some students with additional teaching needs will leave and others will enrol, broadly balancing the school profile.

Further additional temporary Language Support is also provided, as necessary, to schools that have high concentrations of pupils that require language (EAL) support. At primary level, these allocations are made on the basis of appeals by schools to the Primary Staffing Appeals Board and at post-primary level to the Post Primary Staffing Appeals Board.

Question No. 149 answered with Question No. 145.

School Guidance Counsellors

150. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated full year cost of restoring ex quota guidance counsellors to all schools. [51124/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Measures announced by my Department as part of Budgets 2016, 2017 and 2018 mean that 500 of the 600 guidance posts that was withdrawn in Budget 2012, will be restored to schools from September 2018.

All of these 500 posts are allocated separately and transparently on the normal staffing schedule of posts for schools. These posts have been ring-fenced so they can only be used for guidance activities and to meet the guidance needs of the school.

The cost of restoring the remaining 100 posts is in the region of €6m. This will be considered in the context of future Budgets, however there are needs across the system which have to be balanced in the decisions made in each budget.

Question No. 151 answered with Question No. 145.

Momentum Programme

152. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the full year cost of increasing the number of places available on the momentum programme by 20%. [51126/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan): The Momentum programme was created in 2012 during the economic downturn to address the needs of long term unemployed and young unemployed individuals. It funded the provision of free education and training projects to support over 12,500 jobseekers (who had been unemployed for twelve months or more) to gain skills and access employment opportunities in growing sectors of the economy.

It was delivered through two programme iterations. The first (Momentum I) ran over the period 2012-2014, and the second (Momentum II) commenced in 2014 and concluded earlier this year. Momentum 1 cost in the order of €17m and Momentum II cost almost €19m. The cost of another round of Momentum with 20% greater numbers than Momentum II would be €22.8 million. It is likely that this total cost would be spread over more than a single year.

Given the overall improvement in the economic position, the welcome decline in the numbers who are unemployed and the consequent reduction in demand for training, there are no plans for a further round of the Momentum programme and participants are not currently being recruited.

Independent evaluations of both programmes have been carried out and published and are available on the SOLAS website at www.solas.ie

School Transport

153. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the full year cost of restoring school transport services to the criteria that existed pre-2011. [51127/17]

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.

The changes introduced in Budget 2011, derived from recommendations in the Value for Money Review of the Scheme and encompassed a number of elements such as national application of the distance rule of 3.2 kilometres at primary level, the cessation of the Closed/Central School Rule at primary level, the cessation of catchment boundary area to determine eligibility at post primary level, the increase from seven to 10 eligible pupils residing in a distinct locality to retain or establish a school transport service and the introduction of charges at primary level.

Given that school transport is a demand led service it is difficult to cost school transport services on the basis of restoring the Scheme to the criteria that existed pre 2011. However, in general the unit cost for transporting mainstream children is some €1,000 per annum, while the unit cost for transporting children with special educational needs is €7,000 or €9,000 when the provision of escorts are included.

During the 2010/11 school year almost 124,000 children were availing of school transport including over 8,000 children with special educational needs.

Teachers' Remuneration

154. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the full year cost of restoring all allowances to new entry teachers which were abolished in 2012 to 2013. [51128/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): As a consequence of the economic crisis, there was a need to enact a number of measures to reduce public expenditure so as to stabilise the country's public finances.

The Government approved a number of measures relating to public service allowances following a public service-wide review of allowances and premium payments conducted by the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform. As a result of the Government decision, certain allowances were withdrawn for new beneficiaries with effect from 1 February 2012. The details are set out in Circular 08/2013.

Any person who was in receipt of the relevant allowances on 31 January 2012 will continue to be paid that allowance except where that teacher ceases that job role or changes school or employer on or after 1 February 2012. Where a teacher is redeployed under the agreed redeployment scheme, this will not be regarded as a cessation.

As part of the public service-wide review of allowances, the Government withdrew qualification allowances for new teachers altogether. As a result of the September 2016 Agreement with Unions, revised salary scales which include the Honours Primary Degree allowance will apply from 1 January 2018 to teacher recruited since 1 January 2011. This will mean that a teacher will start on a salary of over €35,900.

The annual cost of restoring the H.Dip allowance is estimated at €6.5 million.

The annual cost of restoring other allowances to new entry teachers in Primary, Voluntary Secondary and Community and Comprehensive schools would be in the region of €0.87m, comprised of €0.37m to restore the Gaeltacht Allowance, €0.49m to restore the Teaching Through Irish allowance and €0.01m to restore the Island Allowance (Primary only).

These costs relate only to teachers paid on payrolls operated by my Department only and do not include the cost of teachers employed by Education and Training Boards.

School Staff

155. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the full year cost of appointing 350 assistant principal posts. [51129/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The recently published Circular 0063/2017 "Leadership and Management in Primary schools" sets out a framework for promotion posts in recognised primary schools.

The commencement of the restoration of middle management posts as part of an agreed distributed leadership model means that the rigidity of the longstanding moratorium on these posts has been lifted and all primary schools can now fill middle management posts in line with circular 0063/2017. This recognises the key role school leadership has in promoting a school environment which is welcoming, inclusive and accountable.

The annual allowance payable in respect of these middle-management posts are as follows:

Assistant Principal I - €8,520

Assistant Principal II - €3,769

Approx. 2600 additional posts of responsibility have been provided for at primary and post-primary level in 2017/18.

Budgets 2016 and 2017 provided an additional 420 Deputy Principal posts in the post primary sector.

Discussions are ongoing with the post primary education partners with the view to agreement and publication of a circular as soon as possible.

School Curriculum

156. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the full year cost of introducing a computing and coding curriculum for primary schools. [51130/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Exact expenditure figures regarding the teaching of Computing or Coding in primary schools are not available, as funding is not allocated by my Department on a subject-by-subject basis. However, work in this area is taking place at both primary and post-primary levels.

The NCCA is in the process of developing a new primary mathematics curriculum and will consider my request to have coding, creative and computational thinking included in the revised curriculum. The NCCA will work with a network of schools during this school year to explore different approaches to integrating coding in the primary curriculum.

Currently the PDST Technology in Education provide training for both primary and post primary teachers in ICT which includes 'Scratch' coding. 5,800 teachers received ICT training in 2016.

Furthermore, a large number of schools are running voluntary coding programmes through initiatives such as Coder Dojo (over 200 dojos in Ireland), Hour of Code, where over 200 events took place in Ireland and the annual computer programming Olympiad held at Dublin City University.

Further resources in this area will be looked at in conjunction with the STEM Education policy statement and implementation plan, which I launched yesterday.

Student Grant Scheme

157. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the full year cost of restoring postgraduate grants to 2011 levels. [51131/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Deputy will be aware of the Programme for Government commitment to increase financial supports for post graduate students with a particular focus on those from low income households.

In response to this commitment, I secured additional funding of €4 million in Budget 2017 and a further €3 million in Budget 2018, to facilitate the reinstatement of full maintenance grants, from September 2017, for the most disadvantaged post graduate students.

This will benefit approximately 1,100 of the most disadvantaged post graduate students who meet the eligibility criteria for the special rate of maintenance grant, from September 2017, and it reverses the budgetary cut that was imposed on this cohort of students in 2012.

However, if the maintenance grants and eligibility for full fees were reintroduced for post-graduate students, the total estimated cost would be approximately €40m. This is additional to the €7 million secured in Budgets 2017 & 2018.

This costing assumes that the actual number of post graduate grant holders (2,141 in 2016/17) will increase to the level prior to the introduction of 2012 Budget measure (6,027 students). It also assumes that students will qualify for the higher fee and maintenance grants.

Student Grant Scheme Expenditure

158. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the full year cost of linking student maintenance grants to the consumer price index, CPI. [51132/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The cost of linking student maintenance grants to the CPI would be entirely contingent on movements in the CPI.

For instance, the annual cost of paying student maintenance grants is circa €172m and therefore, a 1% movement in the CPI would cost €1.72m per annum.

Student Assistance Fund

159. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the full year cost of increasing the student assistance fund to peak levels in 2012 to 2013. [51133/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): In December 2012, an additional €3 million was approved to supplement the Student Assistance Fund (SAF) following a survey conducted by the HEA in relation to the demand for the Fund.

This supplementary funding was a once-off exceptional measure which was taken in the context of long grant delays/issues encountered by Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI) in its initial year of operation.

An additional allocation of €1.5m was secured in budget 2016 for the Student Assistance Fund. The allocation under the Fund in 2017 is €8.1 million.

Pupil-Teacher Ratio

160. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the way in which the reduced pupil teacher ratio, 26:1, as announced in budget 2018 will be implemented; the way the reduced ratio to the 2018-2019 staffing schedule will be applied; if the reduction will be applied to all points on the staffing schedule; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51178/17]

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 also includes an appeals mechanism for schools to submit an appeal under certain criteria to an independent Appeals Board.

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

Budget 2018 marked the second year of major reinvestment in the education sector, as we continue to implement the Action Plan for Education, which has the central aim to make the Irish Education and training service the best in Europe within a decade.

Budget 2018 includes a further one point improvement in the staffing schedule in primary schools which brings the position to the most favourable ever seen at primary level. This measure will further assist all schools at the upper end of their individual respective bands. This budget measure delivers on a commitment made in the Confidence and Supply Agreement and Programme for Government to reduce primary schools class size.

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

The detailed staffing arrangements including the staffing schedule 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.

Irish Language

161. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will consider exempting children with dyspraxia from the requirement to learn Irish; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51246/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Exemptions from the study of Irish are granted in accordance with the provisions of Departmental Circular 12/96 for primary schools and M10/94 for post-primary schools. The criteria provides that exemptions may be granted by school authorities for certain categories of students with special educational needs as set out in these Circulars. Currently, a diagnosis of dyspraxia is not among the categories of special educational need for which an exemption may be granted.

My Department is currently conducting a review of arrangements for the granting of exemptions from the study of Irish. To date, the review has included a research phase and is being led by the Department's Inspectorate and the Department's Curriculum and Assessment Policy Unit. This research phase is ongoing and will inform further policy actions in this area.

Brexit Staff

162. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the estimated cost of hiring additional Brexit staff in his Department; the cost by grade; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50914/17]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): Managing our response to Brexit has impacted on the work of many staff at Headquarters and a significant number of those overseas. It is important to emphasise that our approach has not been merely to recruit or assign additional staff, but rather also to prioritise Brexit in the work of our entire Department. Additional staff have been assigned to the key Divisions with responsibility for Brexit matters, the European Union Division and the Ireland, UK and Americas (IUKA) Divi-

sion, to cover the issues arising from the UK exit process. For operational and service oriented units like the Passport Office and Consular service, there has been a marked increase in demand for passports and citizenship via foreign birth registration from applicants in Northern Ireland and in Britain.

Many business units of my Department at headquarters in Dublin are involved in some way as part of the response to the UK exit. For example the Legal Division, the Trade Division and the Policy Planning Unit.

Overseas, additional posts have been assigned to our Embassies in London, Berlin, and Paris as well as the Permanent Representation of Ireland to the European Union in Brussels.

To support the complex and intensive negotiation process, my Department received an additional €3.2 million as part of the 2017 allocation. The Department has also allocated an additional budget of €2 million. This budget was used to increase the number of staff assigned to the management and support of the negotiations and to increase the level of support provided to our colleagues across all Government Departments and agencies.

These measures remain under review. The Department will allocate additional staff resources as deemed necessary to further augment our level of support across Government and across our network.

Departmental Communications

163. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if his attention has been drawn to the internal report by his Department that was reported in the media on 23 November 2017 (details supplied) [50531/17]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): I am aware of the matter to which the Deputy refers. A core part of the work of our Embassies in the EU is to report on views on Brexit in other Member States. A weekly summary of such reports is prepared. These summaries, like the reports on which they are based, are internal and confidential and not intended for the public domain. In the light of this regrettable event, arrangements for their preparation and circulation are being reviewed within my Department.

Diplomatic Representation

164. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the timeframe for an appeal in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50773/17]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): I have been advised by officials from the Embassy of Ireland in Ankara that it is not possible to provide a timeframe for an appeals process in the Turkish courts to be completed, as this timeframe can vary from case to case. An appeal process is a judicial process and the Irish Government has no role in a matter such as this which is before the courts of another jurisdiction. Embassy officials are aware that this citizen has been appointed state legal representation which would be best placed to advise on this appeal process. Officials at the Embassy are in regular contact with this citizen's family and are continuing to provide appropriate Consular Assistance.

Female Genital Mutilation

165. **Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade his plans to provide multi-year funding for the next phase of the UNFPA-UNICEF joint programme on female genital mutilation, FGM, which is the largest global response to accelerate the elimination of FGM, in order to meet Target 5.3 of the sustainable development goals; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50827/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Ciarán Cannon): The practice of female genital mutilation (FGM) is a clear violation of the human rights of women and girls. It has serious social, health and psychological consequences and is one of the most pervasive forms of gender based violence. Girls and women subjected to FGM are at risk of early marriage and dropping out of school. In turn, this is linked to reduced opportunities for growth, development and sustainable incomes more generally. It is estimated that more than three million girls are at risk of undergoing FGM every year. Ireland played a central role at the United Nations brokering the Sustainable Development Goals, which asks all UN members to eliminate FGM by 2030. Ireland advocated strongly for the inclusion of this particular target on FGM, which is intended to provide much needed impetus to international action to end this appalling practice.

Tackling violence against women and girls is an important focus of Ireland's development aid programme, which we see as critical to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Through our support for multilateral organisations and NGOs, together with policy work at multiple levels, Irish official development assistance works towards the elimination of FGM, as well as towards tackling many of its root causes, including persistent poverty and gender inequality.

In addition to core funding of €10 million in 2017 to the UN agencies most involved in addressing FGM (UNICEF and UNFPA), Ireland also supports those agencies' *Joint Programme on Eliminating FGM: Accelerating Change*. Since the Joint Programme was launched in 2007, Ireland has provided over €1 million in funding, including, most recently, €250,000 in 2016. The next phase of the Joint Programme on Eliminating FGM is due to run from 2018 to 2021.

A new White Paper on Ireland's policy on international development will be prepared in the first half of next year. This will set out clear priorities for the coming years, including on how Ireland's overseas development assistance will contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Brexit Negotiations

166. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he has communicated a position to the European Commission regarding the practical measures that might be taken to ensure the commitment to human rights equivalence enshrined in the Good Friday Agreement is adequately protected in the first phase of Brexit negotiations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50855/17]

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.

Overseas Development Aid Data

167. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the cost of reaching the 0.7% ODA and GNP target from its current base of approximately 0.3% in incremental steps, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50951/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Ciarán Cannon): The Government is strongly committed to Ireland's overseas development co-operation programme and to its place at the heart of our foreign policy. Our policy for International Development, "One World, One Future", clearly articulates our commitment to the UN target of providing 0.7% of Gross National Income (GNI) in Official Development Assistance (ODA), as economic conditions allow.

The current Programme for Government sets out our ambition to make progress towards the UN target as resources permit. This progress needs to be made in a sustainable and manageable way, building on Ireland's recognised role as a reliable and effective partner in contributing to ending global poverty and hunger, and in providing humanitarian assistance. In order to prepare for greater progress towards the UN target, a new White Paper on Irish overseas development assistance will be produced next year.

For 2018, the Government has allocated just over €707 million for ODA, the third consecutive year ODA has increased. Based on current estimates, it is anticipated this level of allocation to deliver an ODA/GNI target of approximately 0.3%.

In line with EU member states, we remain committed to making incremental, sustainable and manageable progress towards achieving the 0.7% UN target by 2030, over the period of the Sustainable Development Goals. Reaching this target will involve significant increases to the ODA budget and requires careful planning and consultation with other Government Departments and stakeholders, which will be informed by the White Paper process next year.

The table sets out a sample stepped scenario for meeting the UN target of spending 0.7% of GNI on ODA by 2030, with interim targets of 0.4% in 2022, 0.5% in 2026 and 0.6% in 2028.

Year	Total ODA In € millions	ODA as a % of Projected GNP
2018	707.10	0.30%
2020	906.37	0.35%
2022	1,109.29	0.40%
2024	1,323.96	0.45%
2026	1,560.65	0.50%
2028	1,986.83	0.60%
2030	2,459.13	0.70%

We have used forecasts for Gross National Product (GNP) as a proxy for GNI in the above calculations because GNI is only calculated retrospectively. In practice the difference between the two tends to be minimal.

Emigrant Support Services

168. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the expenditure on the emigrant support programme and the full year cost of increasing expenditure by 5%, 10%, 15% and 20%; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50952/17]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The budget for the Emigrant Support Programme in 2017 was €11.595 million, this in line with budget levels in recent years and also stands as the budget for 2018. An increase of 5% on the 2017 budget would cost €579,750. An increase of 10% on the 2017 budget would cost €1,159,500. An increase of 15% on the 2017 budget would cost €1,739,250. An increase of 20% on the 2017 budget would cost €2,319,000.

Overseas Development Aid Expenditure

169. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the expen-

diture on the trust fund for Africa and the full year cost of increasing expenditure by 5%, 10%, 15% and 20%; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50953/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Ciarán Cannon): The *European Union Emergency Trust Fund for stability and addressing root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa* is an element of a comprehensive package of EU initiatives to support stability across the North, East (Horn of Africa) and West (Sahel/Lake Chad) African Regions, contributing to tackling the root causes of instability, forced displacement and irregular migration. This Trust Fund was launched at the EU-Africa Summit on migration in Valletta, Malta, on 11-12 November 2015 and will operate until 2020. Almost €3.2 billion has been pledged for the Trust Fund by the EU and EU Member States.

At the time of its launch, Ireland made a commitment to provide a bilateral contribution of €3 million over the period covered by the Trust Fund, 2016 to 2020 (€600,000 per annum). This initial commitment is earmarked for the Horn of Africa region. To date, Ireland has disbursed €1.2 million, our contributions for 2016 and 2017.

At the meeting of the European Council of 19-20 October 2017, and in response to a call by President of the European Council, Donald Tusk, for further pledges to meet pressing needs, the Taoiseach pledged additional bilateral Irish funding of €3 million by 2020, doubling Ireland's total commitment to the Trust Fund.

It is envisaged that €400,000 of the additional funding will be provided before the end of 2017 and a further €400,000 in 2018 (bringing our total annual contributions to the Trust Fund in each of these years to €1 million), with the remaining balance of €2.2 million to be disbursed over 2019 and 2020.

Ireland also contributes to the European Development Fund (EDF) which in turn supports the Trust Fund (€2.29 billion pledged by EDF).

Incremental increases of the type set out in the Deputy's question are not planned.

Diplomatic Representation Expenditure

170. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the average full year cost of running an embassy and the average full year cost of running a consulate; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50954/17]

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 work of our embassy and consulate network around the world continues to be important in Ireland's economic recovery and the restoration of our international reputation. Our network promotes Ireland's political, economic and cultural interests and values, provide services to our citizens, develop strategic stakeholder relationships and represent Ireland in international organisations.

Our Embassies' work in support of Ireland's interests includes:

- Promoting Ireland as a source of high-quality exports, a destination for investment, research, study and tourism to targeted audiences and contacts.
- Supporting trade missions and other trade-focused high-level visits, record numbers of which have taken place in the last five years.

- Directly assisting Irish companies with advice, introductions and working to resolve regulatory or market access issues, in partnership with Enterprise Ireland.
- Providing front-line consular and passport services to Irish citizens overseas.
- Influencing and negotiating for Ireland on issues that could impact our interests and priorities.

The cost of operating an embassy and consulate can vary significantly depending on the location, the type, the range of services provided and the resulting overall size of the embassy. The larger embassies/consulates would cost in the region of €1m to €5m per annum to operate. Smaller single diplomatic officer embassies/consulates would cost in the region of €0.5m per annum to operate.

Diplomatic Representation

171. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the number of additional embassy staff that have been hired since the Brexit referendum result of 23 June 2016; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50955/17]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): Brexit is undoubtedly one of the most significant challenges the country will face in the coming years in terms of the peace process and relationships within and between these islands. Protecting our economic interests in terms of trade and investment with the UK is a key priority for my Department, as well as the need to drive further diversification of our trade and investment flows globally. We have already augmented our diplomatic teams in Berlin, Paris, London and Brussels to manage the negotiation process and in part to support trade promotion efforts in the United Kingdom and the Eurozone. Those posts are detailed in the table.

My priority as Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade will be to maintain, grow and diversify our share of international trade, employment and investment given the challenges of Brexit and a more competitive world. The recent decision to open six new diplomatic missions was informed by this objective. The benefits to the country in terms of expanded influence and the promotion of Ireland's interests and values are expected to be considerable in the years ahead. New Embassies will open in Santiago, Chile; Bogotá, Colombia; Amman, Jordan; and Wellington, New Zealand; and new Consulates General in Vancouver, western Canada and Mumbai, India, on a phased basis from 2018. The expansion will be guided by my Department's Statement of Strategy, which provides the overarching framework for our strategic objectives and operational targets. Our expanded network will enhance Ireland's visibility globally, extend our influence and position us for trade and investment growth in new and existing markets. It will also benefit travelling citizens and engagement with the Diaspora.

Location	Additional Posts Sanctioned post 23 June 2016
Ireland's Permanent Representation to the EU, Brussels	1 Counsellor 1 First Secretary 1 Third Secretary
Embassy of Ireland, Paris	1 Counsellor
Embassy of Ireland, Berlin	1 Counsellor
Embassy of Ireland, London	1 First Secretary
	2 Third Secretaries
	1 Higher Executive Officer

Location	Additional Posts Sanctioned post 23 June 2016
	1 Executive Officer
	5 Interns

In addition to the posts listed above, Embassy London has also been augmented in response to an increased demand for passports and foreign birth registrations, and some 10 additional local staff were hired in other missions overseas.

The measures my Department have put in place to manage our response to the UK decision to leave the EU remain under review as the negotiations on the UK's exit from the EU intensify. I will ensure that the Department maintains the ability and agility to respond to new opportunities for Irish citizens and businesses.

Peace and Reconciliation Programme

172. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the expenditure on the peace and reconciliation fund and the full year cost of increasing expenditure by 5%, 10%, 15% and 20%, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50956/17]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Reconciliation Fund, which is administered by my Department, was established in 1982 to support civil society organisations in creating better understanding between the people and traditions of the island of Ireland, and also between Ireland and Britain. Over €48 million has been allocated to over 2,000 projects. As part of the 2014 Stormont House Agreement, the Government committed to the continued allocation of €2.7 million annually to the Reconciliation Fund. If funding were increased in 2018 by the percentages indicated by the Deputy, the allocation would amount to:

If increased by:	Amount would be:
Plus 5 per cent	€2.835 million
Plus 10 per cent	€2.97 million
Plus 15 per cent	€3.105 million
Plus 20 per cent	€3.24 million

Any significant increases in funding would also need to take account of the level of staffing resources required to ensure the continued effective operation of the Reconciliation Fund.

More information on the Reconciliation Fund and details of the application process are available on the Department's website: <https://www.dfa.ie/about-us/funding/reconciliation-fund/>.

Garda Reserve

173. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of Garda reserves serving in An Garda Síochána as of 24 November 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51303/17]

177. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the strength of the

Garda Reserve by Garda division on 31 October 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50726/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 173 and 177 together.

As the Deputy will appreciate, the Garda Commissioner is responsible for the recruitment and training of the Garda Reserve and the distribution of resources, including personnel, among the various Garda Divisions and I, as Minister, have no direct role in the matter.

The “Programme for a Partnership Government” includes a commitment to double the Garda Reserve to act in a supportive role undertaking local patrols and crime reduction measures. In line with this the Government has in place a plan to achieve a Reserve strength of 2,000 by 2021. I am pleased that Budget 2018 will facilitate the continued strengthening of the Reserve next year with new Reserves expected to commence training early in 2018 following the undertaking of a recruitment campaign earlier this year.

In conjunction with the major expansion of the Reserve over the next number of years we must ensure that it is used to optimum effect to support effective policing. To inform future decisions around the use of the Reserve An Garda Síochána is conducting a strategic review as a matter of priority with a view to completion before the end of this year. As a first step the Garda Executive has taken a decision to transfer the management of the Reserve from the Human Resource and People Development Directorate to the Assistant Commissioner with responsibility for Community Engagement. This is intended to ensure that its development and deployment is viewed more broadly through a community policing lens. This is a very welcome step as it is my strong view that the greatest dividend to be gained from the Reserve is in terms of a visible presence on the ground engaging with local communities.

The review will take cognisance of the changed environment in which the expanded Reserve will operate as the major reform programme that is underway is implemented. These reforms include the drive towards a medium term target of 20% civilians by 2021 to boost the management capacity of the organisation and to free up Gardaí to front-line policing duties, and also the phased implementation of the Divisional model of policing to enable resources to be deployed more efficiently to prevent and detect crime.

Garda Reserve Strength 31 October 2017

Division	Total
DMR South Central	37
DMR North Central	37
DMR North	45
DMR East	10
DMR South	22
DMR West	26
Waterford	19
Wexford	19
Tipperary	18
Kilkenny/Carlow	26
Cork City	44
Cork North	14
Cork West	10

Division	Total
Kerry	20
Limerick	31
Donegal	18
Cavan/Monaghan	11
Sligo/Leitrim	18
Louth	26
Clare	6
Mayo	20
Galway	31
Roscommon/Longford	9
Westmeath	13
Meath	16
Kildare	20
Laois/Offaly	17
Wicklow	20
Total	603

Garda Civilian Staff Data

174. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of civilian members of An Garda Síochána as of 24 November 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51304/17]

176. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of civilians in the Garda workforce in each Garda division on 31 October 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50725/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 174 and 176 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, as of the 31 October 2017, the latest date for which numbers are readily available, there were 2,151 full time civilian staff members working throughout the organisation carrying out senior management, administrative and technical roles. I am further informed that the attached table details the number of civilian staff currently deployed in each Garda Division as of that date. The balance of civilian staff are attached to Garda Headquarters and carryout various roles including in HR, Finance, ICT, as well as the Garda College.

As part of its Five Year Reform and High-level Workforce Plan for An Garda Síochána, the Government has agreed an overall vision for a Garda workforce of 21,000 personnel by 2021 to include 15,000 Garda members, 2,000 Garda Reserve members and 4,000 civilians. The projected 4,000 civilians will effectively double the current figure and represents a medium-term target of a Garda organisation 20% comprised of civilians. The 20% target will be achieved

through a twin-track approach of firstly, a “civilian by default” policy to be adopted in relation to the filling of all new posts other than operational policing posts and for non-operational policing posts that become vacant and, secondly, the redeployment of Gardaí to policing roles where their skills can be used to best effect with the backfilling of these roles by suitably qualified civilians where necessary.

So far this year some 150 additional civilians have been recruited to An Garda Síochána. This has allowed the filling of critical skills and capacity gaps across the organisation and will facilitate the redeployment of the first batch of 43 Gardaí. By quarter 1 next year the Commissioner projects that some 160 Gardaí will have been redeployed. This is a welcome start but as illustrated by the Garda Inspectorate Report “Changing Policing in Ireland” there is considerable scope for redeployment to operational policing. The Inspectorate Report identified some 1,500 posts that could be suitable. Furthermore Garda management completed an organisation deployment survey earlier this year which identifies some 2,000 posts for further examination in this regard. It will take a determined effort by Garda management over the next number of years to achieve redeployments on this scale but I can assure the Deputy of the Government’s commitment to the target of 20% and to ensuring that the unprecedented investment in the workforce and other resources for An Garda Síochána are used to optimum effect to provide effective policing services across the country.

The Deputy may also wish to be aware that a number civilians have been appointed to newly created senior leadership posts to support the major reform programme underway including an Executive Director for Strategy and Transformation and an Executive Director for Legal And Compliance. A competition is underway for another critical senior post, that of Chief Data Officer. This transformation of the composition of the senior team will assist in bring diverse perspectives and management skills to the top levels in the organisation.

I am pleased to say that I have secured funding for the recruitment of up to a further 500 civilians in Budget 2018 to support the continuation of this major programme of civilianisation.

Garda Civilian Strength 31 October 2017

Division	2017
DMR South Central	30
DMR North Central	41
DMR North	38
DMR East	22
DMR South	34
DMR West	50
Waterford	30
Wexford	33
Tipperary	40
Kilkenny/Carlow	31
Cork City	67
Cork North	29
Cork West	24
Kerry	37
Limerick	50
Donegal	33
Cavan/Monaghan	37

Division	2017
Sligo/Leitrim	29
Louth	26
Clare	31
Mayo	31
Galway	49
Roscommon/Longford	29
Westmeath	24
Meath	30
Kildare	30
Laois/Offaly	24
Wicklow	26
Total	924

Garda Strength

175. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of gardaí in each Garda division on 31 October 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50724/17]

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.

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 31 October 2017, the latest date for which figures are currently available, the strength of An Garda Síochána was 13,378 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 in-

vestment 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 Division, as of the 31 October 2017, that latest date for which figures are currently available is as set out in the table, as supplied by the Commissioner.

Garda Strength by Division 31 October 2017

Division	Total
D.M.R. EAST	376
D.M.R. NORTH	663
D.M.R. NORTH CENTRAL	605
D.M.R. SOUTH	530
D.M.R. SOUTH CENTRAL	618
D.M.R. WEST	665
KILDARE	354
LAOIS / OFFALY	334
MEATH	304
WESTMEATH	266
WICKLOW	301
CAVAN / MONAGHAN	324
DONEGAL	384
LOUTH	312
SLIGO / LEITRIM	299
KILKENNY/CARLOW	324
TIPPERARY	376
WATERFORD	292
WEXFORD	284
CORK CITY	662
CORK NORTH	317
CORK WEST	317
KERRY	291
LIMERICK	555
CLARE	305
GALWAY	579
MAYO	318
ROSCOMMON / LONGFORD	309

Question No. 176 answered with Question No. 174.

Question No. 177 answered with Question No. 173.

Garda Deployment

178. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of community gardaí by Garda division on 31 October 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50727/17]

184. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the progress towards establishing community policing teams in each division as referenced in the Garda modernisation and renewal programme 2016 to 2021; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50747/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 178 and 184 together.

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

This Government is committed to ensuring a strong and visible police presence throughout the country in order to maintain and strengthen community engagement, provide reassurance to citizens and to deter crime. To make this a reality for all the Government has in place a plan for an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 personnel by 2021 comprising 15,000 Garda members, 2,000 Reserve members and 4,000 civilians. This plan is proceeding apace.

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 - an 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.

Community policing is at the heart of An Garda Síochána. It provides a means of recognising that every community – both urban and rural – has its own concerns and expectations.

I am informed by the Garda Commissioner that the Garda National Model of Community

Policing plays a key part in responding to crime by taking into account and responding to local conditions and needs. Clear objectives are set, such as high visibility in the community, ease of contact by members of the public, and enhanced support for crime prevention strategies. Community policing is not, of course, confined to dedicated Community Gardaí, all Gardaí have a role to play in community policing in carrying out their duties. In addition, the National Community Policing Office, attached to the Garda Community Relations Bureau, captures best practice in community policing initiatives and disseminates these practices through its communication network.

An Garda Síochána's Modernisation and Renewal Programme 2016-2021, published in June 2016, places a strong emphasis on developing and supporting the community policing ethos of the organisation and enhancing the current delivery model so that Gardaí spend more time in the community, gaining public confidence and trust and providing a greater sense of security. It will result in the introduction of multi-skilled Community Policing Teams in every District.

These Community Policing Teams will be made-up of Gardaí from a number of different units who will work with the local community to prevent and detect crime. In addition, each Community Policing Team will be supported by a Community Safety Forum. The Forum which will comprise of local Gardaí, members of the public and community groups will promote crime prevention strategies. This clear and consistent approach to community policing will ensure a better service and enhanced community safety.

In terms of progress on this important initiative, I am informed by the Commissioner that a draft Community Policing Framework which outlines the manner in which Community Policing Teams and Community Safety Fora will be established has been completed and is subject to internal review before being approved by the Executive for implementation. The Commissioner anticipates that a number of Community Policing Teams will be established on a pilot basis early next year.

Undoubtedly, the ongoing recruitment process will support all Garda activities and will enhance the provision of effective Community Policing throughout the country.

The information requested by the Deputy as provided by the Commissioner is set out in the table.

Community Garda 31 October 2017

Division	Total
D.M.R.S.C.	33
DMR NC	92
DMR NORTH	50
DMR EAST	29
DMR SOUTH	41
DMR WEST	64
Waterford	35
Wexford	8
Tipperary	70
Kilkenny/Carlow	91
Cork City	27
Cork North	7
Cork West	4

Division	Total
Kerry	8
Limerick	37
Donegal	2
Cavan/Monaghan	2
Sligo/Leitrim	7
Louth	12
Clare	7
Mayo	3
Galway	15
Roscommon/Longford	10
Westmeath	10
Meath	7
Kildare	4
Laois/Offaly	2
Wicklow	13
Total	690

Garda Strength

179. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of gardaí who have transferred into the Kildare division in 2017; and the number of gardaí who have transferred out of the Kildare division in 2017 by rank; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50728/17]

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

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

I am informed by the Commissioner that on the 31 October 2017, the latest date for which figures are readily available, the strength of the Kildare Division was 354. There are also 20 Garda Reserves and 30 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, of whom 72 were assigned to the Kildare Division. 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 Kildare Division, in the coming years.

I am advised by the Garda Commissioner that the number of Gardaí that transferred into the Kildare Division and out of the Kildare Division in 2017 by Rank is as set out in the tables.

Gardaí that have transferred in to the Kildare Division in 2017

Sergeant	Garda	Garda Reserve	Total
4	76	1	81

Gardaí that have transferred out of the Kildare Division in 2017

Sergeant	Garda	Total
4	35	39

Family Reunification Data

180. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of times ministerial discretion on humanitarian grounds has been used to waive the economic conditions for sponsors applying for non-EEA family reunification; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50731/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that the position on family reunification for non-refugees is set out in the Policy Document on Non-EEA Family Reunification published by my predecessor on 31 December 2013.

The Policy Document, which is available on the INIS website www.inis.gov.ie, provides a comprehensive statement of national immigration policy on the area of family reunification. The policies outlined in the document apply to all decision making in relation to family reunification cases where ministerial discretion applies, including long stay (join family) visa ap-

plications. Records are not maintained in such a way as to provide statistics on cases whereby discretion was exercised in the issuing of join family visas.

Family Reunification Applications

181. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality to set out the number of applications for family reunification made by persons with international protection here in each of the years 2012 to 2016; the average number of family members requested per sponsor for the same period; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50732/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): During the period referred to by the Deputy applications for family reunification could be made in respect of a person's spouse and children, or in the case of a minor his or her parents, as well as other extended family members including grandparent, grandchild, brother, sister, ward or guardian.

I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that the number of family members included in family reunification applications can vary considerably, with some applying for one family member only and, in other cases, a much wider dispersal of family members.

The table provides details of the numbers of applications received for the years requested and the number of family members included in those applications. It should be noted however that applications in respect of subjects who fell outside the scope of the family reunification legislation were rejected at first instance without being recorded, and such subjects are therefore not reflected in the table.

Year	No. of applications received	No. of eligible family members included in applications
2012	251	478
2013	201	429
2014	271	648
2015	452	1,168
2016	705	1,747

Court Judgments

182. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality to outline the progress that has been made on introducing legislation in view of the Supreme Court finding on the ban on work for asylum seekers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50741/17]

196. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when motions will be brought before the Houses of the Oireachtas enabling Ireland to opt in to the EU (Recast) Reception Conditions Directive (2013/33/EU); the outstanding measures to date required to demonstrate to the EU Commission Ireland's compliance with each article in the directive; the timeframe for the implementation of each measure until formal approval of Ireland's application to participate in the directive is given by the EU Commission; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50852/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 182 and 196 together.

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.

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).

My Department is in the process of arranging for the Motions to be brought before the Houses of the Oireachtas. 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.

Court Accommodation Provision

183. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality to outline the position regarding Westport Courthouse; if it will not reopen as a courthouse; if so, the future plans for the building; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50745/17]

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 Westport Courthouse was temporarily closed in 2013 as the building fell short of the required standards on health and safety grounds. In the period since, court business is being dealt with in Castlebar Courthouse, a 20 minute drive away.

The Court Service has also informed me that a report commissioned from the Office of Public Works identified a number of issues with the ceilings, roof and chimneys of Westport

Courthouse and that at the moment, funds are not available to progress repairs. However, nationally, a capital programme for courthouses is underway, it involves new court buildings and renovations to courthouses. The capital budget provided to the Courts Service is around €5 million in both 2017 and 2018.

The Courts Service has further advised that Mayo County Council recently approached them with a proposal to take over ownership of the building for alternative community use and that this proposal is under active consideration.

Question No. 184 answered with Question No. 178.

Garda Information and Communications Technology

185. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality to outline the status of the project to enhance network access to rural Garda stations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50748/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will appreciate, decisions in relation to the provision and allocation of Garda equipment and resources, including ICT, are a matter for the Garda Commissioner and I, as Minister, have no direct role in the matter.

The Deputy will be aware that the Garda Síochána Modernisation and Renewal Programme 2016-2021 is intended to professionalise, modernise and renew An Garda Síochána to ensure that the organisation can meet present and future challenges.

I am informed by the Garda authorities that the Programme prioritises ICT projects with the aim of fully embedding technology initiatives to improve the services delivered to communities by An Garda Síochána. In this context, I understand that there are currently 426 stations connected to the Garda Network and 138 stations that are not connected. Members in non-networked locations can contact the Garda Information Services Centre (GISC) or an associated networked station if required.

A project was established under the Modernisation and Renewal Programme to enhance rural access to the Garda network by connecting the majority of the unconnected stations to the Garda Network. Where sites cannot be connected, for example where local broadband services are not yet available, other methods of providing members with network access which may include the provision of mobile technology are being explored.

Garda Operations

186. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality to set out the status of on the Garda mobility strategy as referenced in the Garda modernisation and renewal programme 2016 to 2021; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50749/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am informed by the Garda authorities that the Garda mobility strategy aims to provide frontline members will greater connectivity to back office systems harnessing the power of mobile technology.

It is intended that the mobile devices will enable Garda members and staff to be more efficient and effective by having mobile access to relevant core policing applications, a wide-range of up to date information and the ability to input and update information in real time. It is also

intended to facilitate greater quality of data input, accountability, transparency and governance.

A pilot of the system in Limerick is intended to complete in Q1 2018.

Independent Review Mechanism

187. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he has received correspondence from a person (details supplied) regarding allegations relating to the way in which An Garda Síochána handled a case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50766/17]

188. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality to specify the relevant authority for the complaint regarding the way in which An Garda Síochána allegedly handled a case (details supplied), in view of the fact that the independent review mechanism deemed it not to be under the ambit of the inquiry after considering it for 18 months; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50767/17]

189. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he has received a report from the Garda Commissioner regarding a case (details supplied); the way in which it was handled; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50768/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 187 to 189, inclusive, together.

The particular case to which I take it the Deputy is referring was amongst the complaints considered under the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM). I can confirm that I am in recent receipt of correspondence from the individual in question which he had sent to An Taoiseach on 22 November 2017 and which the Taoiseach has since forwarded to me. I am also in receipt of the Deputy's correspondence to me dated 23 November 2017. A reply to this correspondence will issue shortly.

As the Deputy will be aware, the IRM was established to review certain allegations of Garda misconduct, or inadequacies in the investigation of certain allegations, which were made to my predecessor as the Minister for Justice and Equality, or to the Taoiseach, with a view to determining to what extent and in what manner further action may have been required in each case. A panel consisting of two Senior and five Junior Counsel was established for the purpose. As in all of the IRM cases, Counsel considered the matters raised by the complainant, the actions already taken in relation to the complaint, and the possible options open to pursue matters. Counsel were then required to use their knowledge and experience of the criminal justice system to recommend whether further action was either possible or appropriate and if so, to recommend the relevant action to be taken.

In this particular case referred to by the Deputy, Counsel's initial recommendation was that the complainant should be contacted and asked to provide the corroborative evidence referred to in his original correspondence. Some additional material was provided by the person. Counsel considered this additional material and, having done so, recommended that the Minister should take no further action in the matter. My predecessor accepted Counsel's recommendation and the individual in question was notified of her decision and the reasons for it.

The report referred to by the Deputy is awaited and I have asked my officials to pursue the matter urgently with the Commissioner. I will revert to the Deputy on receipt of same.

Property Registration Authority

190. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if an application for a map review (details supplied) will be expedited; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50786/17]

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

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

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

Garda Vetting

191. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality to outline his views on a matter (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50789/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I refer the Deputy to my answer to his Parliamentary Question No. 204 of 14 November 2017 on the same subject. The situation remains unchanged. In order to be helpful, I would reiterate to the Deputy that there are certain circumstances where a single vetting disclosure can be shared by organisations where this is agreed to by the organisations concerned and by the vetting applicant. This is provided for at Section 12 of the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Acts 2012 to 2016.

Probate Applications

192. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if the ongoing backlog in the Probate Office is a factor in the number of vacant homes; the data in regard to the number of homes affected by the backlog; when the backlog will be completed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50814/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Probate Office is an office of the High Court and management of the courts is the responsibility of the Courts Service, which is independent in exercising its functions under the Courts Service Act 1998. Probate functions are also carried out by County Registrars at District Probate Registries in 14 provincial court offices.

However, in order to be of assistance to the Deputy, I have had enquiries made and the Courts Service has informed me that a Grant of Representation in a deceased person's estate may be required for a variety of reasons, including the transfer of title to property, and statistics as to why a Grant must issue are not maintained in the Probate Office/Registries.

The Courts Service has advised that its statistics are not compiled in such a way as to provide the number of probate applications which relate to residential homes. This information could only be obtained by the examination of each individual application, which would require the expenditure of a disproportionate amount of staff time which would not be warranted. Therefore, it is not possible to provide the number of homes affected as sought by the Deputy.

The Courts Service has further advised that when the Probate Office/Registries are notified that there is a sale of property pending in an estate, this Grant is always expedited. In the Probate Office in Dublin it usually issues within a 2 to 3 week timeframe in Solicitors' applications, while Personal Applicants are seen by appointment as soon as possible and the Grant issues within 3 to 4 days of their appointment with the Probate Office.

The Courts Service has also informed me that it is aware of the lengthy waiting times for probate applications and particularly personal applications to the Probate Office in Dublin and is working to improve the situation. Additional resources have been provided to the Probate Office and to address the current delays further additional resources are being made available.

The Courts Service is currently finalising a full review of the probate system and it is anticipated that a report with recommendations for the modernisation of the process will be completed by the end of 2017 for presentation to the senior management team of the Courts Service and to the Courts Service Board.

Immigration Status

193. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality to set out the current and or expected residency status in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50825/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am informed by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that the person concerned is the subject of a Deportation Order signed on 25 August 2017. This Order requires the person concerned to remove themselves from the State and remain outside the State. The enforcement of the Deportation Order is a matter for the Garda National Immigration Bureau.

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

Garda Deployment

194. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality to set out the number of gardaí available in the Dún Laoghaire district; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50826/17]

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.

As the Deputy will be aware the District referred to is part of the Dublin Metropolitan Region (DMR) East Division. I am informed by the Commissioner that on the 31 October 2017, the latest date for which figures are readily available, the strength of the D.M.R. East Division was 376 of which 201 were assigned to the Dun Laoghaire District. There are also 10 Garda Reserves and 22 civilians attached to the Division. When appropriate, the work of local Gardaí is supported by a number of Garda national units such as the National Bureau of Criminal Investigation, the Garda National Economic Crime Bureau, the Armed Response Unit 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, 57 of whom have been assigned to the D.M.R. East Division. 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 D.M.R. East Division, in the coming years.

Forensic Science Ireland Laboratory

195. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality to set out the number of tenders received for the construction of the new State forensics laboratory by the closing date of 20 November 2017; the timeframe to assess the tenders; the timeframe for construction to commence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50844/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy is aware, the construction of the new Forensic Science Laboratory is being managed by the Office of Public Works (OPW) on behalf of my Department.

I am informed by the OPW that, following a pre-qualification process, a total of seven contractors were invited to tender for this project. As additional information was issued to the contractors during the tender period, the return deadline has been extended to 20th December

2017. Therefore, none have been received to date. The assessment of the tenders will be undertaken in conjunction with the appointment of mechanical and electrical sub-contractors which is expected to take a number of months. The projected construction period is two years.

Question No. 196 answered with Question No. 182.

Protected Disclosures

197. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to correspondence of 25 October 2017 from a person (details supplied) if an investigation into the theft of prison property on 19 and 20 August 2017 has commenced; the way in which this disclosure was investigated; if the report will be published; if the report has been concluded; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50879/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will be aware, the Protected Disclosures Act 2014 sets out the importance of maintaining confidentiality in relation to persons making protected disclosures, and I am therefore limited in what I can say.

I can confirm, however, that my Department's Internal Audit Unit received a disclosure from a person, which included, inter alia, an allegation of theft of Prison Service property on the 19th and 20th of August 2017. No names of personnel involved or details of the item / items of prison property allegedly stolen were provided in the correspondence. No further information was provided by the person in response to a request from a Senior Auditor allocated to investigate the matter.

The Audit Unit were unable to identify other sources of information to allow a review of the allegations. In the absence of further information the issue cannot be progressed at this time.

Garda Station Refurbishment

198. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if in the context of the conditions evident in Sligo Garda station, which necessitated Garda members to vacate same; if a review of all Garda stations in the State has been carried out, in order to ensure that they are adequate and suitable accommodation from the perspective of sanitation, dampness, suitable shower facilities, heating and so on; if a programme of refurbishment has been put in place to deal with same immediately or in the alternative have new stations constructed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50893/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Deputy will appreciate that the programme of replacement and refurbishment of Garda accommodation is progressed by the Garda authorities working in close cooperation with the Office of Public Works (OPW), which has responsibility for the provision and maintenance of Garda accommodation. This includes identifying and progressing any necessary remedial or refurbishment works required at individual stations. As Minister, I have no direct role in these matters.

I am assured by the Garda authorities that An Garda Síochána liaises very closely with the OPW in relation to any maintenance issues arising in Garda stations. This ensures that any issues arising which require remedial attention are addressed with the least possible delay.

As the Deputy will be aware, the Garda Building and Refurbishment Programme 2016-2021, which is an ambitious 5 year Programme based on agreed Garda priorities continues to

benefit over thirty locations around the country. The Programme includes over €60million of Exchequer funding as well as a major Public Private Partnership project. It will provide new stations and modernise older stations at key locations around the country, ensuring safe, modern working environment for members and staff of An Garda Síochána as well as fit-for-purpose facilities for visitors, victims and suspects.

The programme includes a number of elements which reflect strategic priorities for An Garda Síochána, including:

- a Public Private Partnership (PPP) project to deliver new Garda stations in Sligo, Clonmel, and Macroom;

- major refurbishment of stations/facilities including facilities for meeting victims of crime;

- essential remedial works to existing stations;

- development of large scale Property and Exhibit Management Stores;

- upgrade of cells and provision of improved Custody Management Facilities.

In addition to the Garda Station Building and Refurbishment Programme, over €100 million has been provided for new Divisional Headquarters in Kevin Street, Dublin and Wexford, as well as for a new Regional Headquarters in Galway. Each of these projects is underway, with the Wexford Divisional HQ handed over to An Garda Síochána for occupation and use on 15 September 2017. I understand that the other projects will be completed by Q1 2018.

Garda Recruitment

199. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the first and full year cost of hiring one additional member of An Garda Síochána; and the cost of that member for the second, third, fourth and fifth year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51027/17]

200. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the first and full year cost of hiring 100 additional gardaí; the full cost for the second, third, fourth and fifth year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51028/17]

201. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the first and full cost of hiring 200 additional gardaí; the full cost for the second, third, fourth and fifth year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51029/17]

202. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the first and full year cost of hiring 300 additional gardaí; the full cost for the second, third, fourth and fifth year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51030/17]

203. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the first and full year cost of hiring 400 additional gardaí; the full cost for the second, third, fourth and fifth year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51031/17]

204. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the first and full year cost of hiring 500 additional gardaí; the full cost for the second, third, fourth and fifth year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51032/17]

205. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the first and full

year cost of hiring 600 additional gardaí; the full cost for the second, third, fourth and fifth year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51033/17]

206. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the first and full year cost of hiring 700 additional gardaí; the full cost for the second, third, fourth and fifth year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51034/17]

207. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the first and full year cost of hiring 800 additional gardaí; the full cost for the second, third, fourth and fifth year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51035/17]

208. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the first and full year cost of hiring 900 additional gardaí; the full cost for the second, third, fourth and fifth year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51036/17]

209. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the first and full year cost of hiring 1,000 additional gardaí; the full cost for the second, third, fourth and fifth year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51037/17]

210. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the first and full year cost of hiring 1,100 additional gardaí; the full cost for the second, third, fourth and fifth year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51038/17]

211. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the first and full year cost of hiring 1,200 additional gardaí; the full cost for the second, third, fourth and fifth year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51039/17]

212. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the first and full year cost of hiring 1,300 additional gardaí; the full cost for the second, third, fourth and fifth year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51040/17]

213. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the first and full year cost of hiring 1,400 additional gardaí; the full cost for the second, third, fourth and fifth year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51041/17]

214. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the first and full year cost of hiring 1,500 additional gardaí; the full cost for the second, third, fourth and fifth year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51042/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 199 to 214, inclusive, together.

I have asked the Garda Commissioner for the specific information requested by the Deputy but, given the detail sought, it has not been possible to provide the information within the time available.

I will revert to the Deputy when it is to hand.

Garda Civilian Staff Data

215. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the cost of hiring an additional member of civilian Garda staff; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51043/17]

216. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the cost of hiring fifty additional members of civilian Garda staff; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51044/17]

217. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the cost of hiring one hundred additional members of civilian Garda staff; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51045/17]

218. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the cost of hiring two hundred additional members of civilian Garda staff; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51046/17]

219. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the cost of hiring three hundred members of civilian Garda staff; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51047/17]

220. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the cost of hiring four hundred additional members of civilian Garda staff; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51048/17]

221. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the cost of hiring five hundred additional members of civilian Garda staff; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51049/17]

222. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the cost of hiring six hundred additional members of civilian Garda staff; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51050/17]

223. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the cost of hiring seven hundred additional members of civilian Garda staff; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51051/17]

224. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the cost of hiring eight hundred additional members of civilian Garda staff; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51052/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 215 to 224, inclusive, 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, as of the 31 October 2017, the latest date for which numbers are readily available there were 2,151 full time civilian staff members working throughout the organisation carrying out senior management, administrative and technical roles.

As part of its Five Year Reform and High-level Workforce Plan for An Garda Síochána, the Government has agreed an overall vision for a Garda workforce of 21,000 personnel by 2021 to include 15,000 Garda members, 2,000 Garda Reserve members and 4,000 civilians. The projected 4,000 civilians will effectively double the current figure and represents a medium-term target of a Garda organisation 20% comprised of civilians.

Additional funding for the recruitment of up to 500 civilians has been provided in Budget 2018 to facilitate the Commissioner in addressing capacity and critical skills gaps across the organisation including in corporate supports, change management, human resources and financial management at the national, regional and Divisional level. These appointments are intended to facilitate deeper civilianisation in the coming years.

The Deputy will appreciate that the cost of recruiting Garda civilian staff in any given year is dependent on the mix of grades involved, however for the purposes of estimating the cost of civilian staff generally, an average figure of €43,000.

On that basis, the following table outlines costings for sample numbers of recruitments and it enables the Deputy to extrapolate the figures for the specific numbers requested by him.

Number of Garda Civilians to be recruited	Estimated Annual Cost
100	€4,300,000
200	€8,600,000
400	€17,200,000
600	€25,800,000
800	€34,400,000

Garda Reserve

225. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the first and full year cost of increasing the strength of the Garda Reserve by 50 members; and the cost for the second, third, fourth and fifth year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51053/17]

226. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the first and full year cost of increasing the strength of the Garda Reserve by 100 members; the cost for the second, third, fourth and fifth year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51054/17]

227. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the first and full year cost of increasing the strength of the Garda Reserve by 120 members; the cost for the second, third, fourth and fifth year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51055/17]

228. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the first and full year cost of increasing the strength of the Garda Reserve by 150 members; the cost for the second, third, fourth and fifth year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51056/17]

229. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the first and full year cost of increasing the strength of the Garda Reserve by 200 members; the cost for the second, third, fourth and fifth year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51057/17]

230. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the first and full year cost of increasing the strength of the Garda Reserve by 250 members; the cost for the second, third, fourth and fifth year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51058/17]

231. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the first and full year cost of increasing the strength of the Garda Reserve by 300 members; the cost for the second, third, fourth and fifth year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51059/17]

232. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the first and full year cost of increasing the strength of the Garda Reserve by 400 members; the cost for the second, third, fourth and fifth year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51060/17]

233. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the first and full year cost of increasing the strength of the Garda Reserve by 500 members; the cost for the second, third, fourth and fifth year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51061/17]

234. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the first and full year cost of increasing the strength of the Garda Reserve by 600 members; the cost for the second, third, fourth and fifth year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51062/17]

235. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the first and full year cost of increasing the strength of the Garda Reserve by 700 members; the cost for the second, third, fourth and fifth year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51063/17]

236. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the first and full year cost of increasing the strength of the Garda Reserve by 800 members; the cost for the second, third, fourth and fifth year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51064/17]

237. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the first and full year cost of increasing the strength of the Garda Reserve by 900 members; the cost for the second, third, fourth and fifth year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51065/17]

238. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the first and full year cost of increasing the strength of the Garda Reserve by 1,000 members; the cost for the second, third, fourth and fifth year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51066/17]

239. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the first and full year cost of increasing the strength of the Garda Reserve by 1,200 members; the cost for the second, third, fourth and fifth year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51067/17]

240. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the first and full year cost of increasing the strength of the Garda Reserve by 1,400 members; the cost for the second, third, fourth and fifth year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51068/17]

241. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the first and full year cost of increasing the strength of the Garda Reserve by 1,500 members; the cost for the second, third, fourth and fifth year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51069/17]

242. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the first and full year cost of increasing the strength of the Garda Reserve by 1,600 members; the cost for the second, third, fourth and fifth year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51070/17]

243. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the first and full year cost of increasing the strength of the Garda Reserve by 1,700 members; the cost for the second, third, fourth and fifth year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51071/17]

244. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the first and full year cost of increasing the strength of the Garda Reserve by 1,800 members; the cost for the second, third, fourth and fifth year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51072/17]

245. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the first and full year cost of increasing the strength of the Garda Reserve by 2,000 members; the cost for the second, third, fourth and fifth year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51073/17]

246. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the first and full year cost of increasing the strength of the Garda Reserve by 2,200 members; the cost for the second, third, fourth and fifth year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51074/17]

247. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the first and full year cost of increasing the strength of the Garda Reserve by 2,400 members; the cost for the second, third, fourth and fifth year respectively; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51075/17]

248. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the cost of increasing the strength of the Garda Reserve by 2,500 members; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51076/17]

249. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the full year cost of increasing the strength of the Garda Reserve to 2,500; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51077/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 225 to 249, inclusive, together.

The Deputy will be aware that the Government has in place a commitment for 2000 Reserve Members by 2021.

It is regrettable that the strength of the Reserve as of 30 September 2017 (the latest date for which figures are available) was 607. However, this is partly attributable to a substantial number of Reserves joining the Gardaí as full-time members in recent years.

It is also attributable to the need for Garda management and the Public Appointments Service to prioritise the running of recruitment campaigns for Garda trainees over those for Reserves. I am sure that the Deputy will agree, notwithstanding the very valuable contribution of Reserve members throughout the country, that this was the right call to make in the circumstances.

Fortunately, with Garda recruitment up and running successfully it was possible to enable a recruitment campaign for the Garda to get underway in March. It attracted approximately 2,400 applicants of whom around 1,600 were successful following assessment. To date approximately 500 applicants have been referred on to the Garda Appointment Office from the Public Appointment Service for vetting and medical. I am advised that applicants from this campaign will enter training in early 2018.

As the Deputy will be aware service in the Garda Reserve is voluntary and unpaid. However, an allowance is payable to Reserve members who complete a minimum of 208 hours duty annually as a contribution towards expenses incurred in performing their duties. The allowance is currently set at €1,000 per annum. As this is a fixed allowance it does not change year to year. In addition, the uniform cost per Reserve member is in the region of €1,300.

Reserves are also reimbursed for expenses incurred while attending court in respect of their service as a Reserve.

Thus, the cost of recruiting new reserve is some €2,300 for the first year and €1,000 per annum thereafter assuming completion of the hours required. It is a relatively straightforward calculation thereafter to calculate the costs involved for the numbers set out in the Deputy’s questions.

As far as increasing the reserve from 607 to 2,500, the cost would be some €4.35 million (i.e. 1,893 x €2,300).

Electronic Tagging

250. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons in custody that are electronically monitored while on temporary release in each of the years 2013 to 2016 and to date in 2017; the number of days each person was on release while electronically monitored; the cost per prisoner per day; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51078/17]

251. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the cost of providing electronic tagging for an additional 500 prisoners per annum; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51079/17]

252. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the cost of providing electronic tagging for an additional 1,000 prisoners per annum; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51080/17]

253. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the cost of providing electronic tagging for an additional 1,500 prisoners per annum; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51081/17]

254. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the cost of providing electronic tagging for an additional 2,000 prisoners per annum; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51082/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 250 to 254, inclusive, together.

I am to advise the Deputy that Part 10 of the Criminal Justice Act 2006 provides for the introduction of electronic monitoring.

Following a competitive tender in 2014, a company was awarded the contract for the supply of electronic monitoring of prisoners for the Irish Prison Service.

I am advised by The Irish Prison Service that electronic monitoring is used to monitor some prisoners who have been granted Temporary Release including for the purpose of the Community Return/Support Scheme. The system is also used to monitor some hospital in-patients who have been granted temporary release from Prison. It thus allows for a significant reduction in staffing costs for hospital escorts.

The current service provider allows for the provision of up to 50 electronic tags to the Irish Prison Service. As of Sunday 26th November 2017 there have been 113 prisoners electronically monitored while on temporary release since March 2013. This figure includes 7 cases who are currently being monitored. The total cost of this service to the Irish Prison Service to date is €529,527. The contract requires a minimum usage of 20 tags.

I am advised by The Irish Prison Service that the average cost per prisoner is impacted upon by the total number of days per year that prisoners are electronic monitored. The table below provides the information as requested by the Deputy in PQ 51078/17.

YEAR	NO. OF PRISONERS TAGGED	TOTAL NO. OF DAYS	AVERAGE COST PER DAY PER PRISONER/TAG
2013 (March to December)	18	1564	€15.51
2014 (January to December)	23	2757	€26.83
*2015 (January to December)	8	716	€214.64
2016 (January to December)	22	2752	€47.13
2017 (January to October)	42	2274	€64.92

The current contract provides for a maximum of 50 tags. Therefore it is not possible to provide the Deputy with the information requested in respect of the cost of providing additional monitoring for 500, 1,000, 1,500 and 2,000 prisoners as this would be outside the current contract parameters.

Crime Data

255. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons charged with an offence under section 12 or 13 of the Criminal Justice (Theft and Fraud Offences) Act 2001 that are currently on bail pending trial; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51083/17]

256. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons charged with an offence under section 12 or 13 of the Criminal Justice (Theft and Fraud Offences) Act 2001 that were on bail in each of the years 2013 to 2016 pending trial; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51084/17]

257. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons charged with an offence in 2016 that were on bail for another offence at the time of being so charged; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51085/17]

258. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons charged with a serious offence attracting up to a maximum of ten years in prison currently on bail pending trial; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51086/17]

259. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons charged with a serious offence attracting up to a maximum of ten years in prison on bail pending trial in each of the years 2013 to 2016; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51087/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 255 to 259, inclusive, together.

It has not been possible to collate the information sought by the Deputy in the time available. However, I have requested a report from the Courts Service in this matter and I will contact the Deputy directly when this report is to hand.

Electronic Tagging

260. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the estimated cost of providing electronic tagging for a person on bail; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51088/17]

261. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the estimated cost of providing electronic tagging for 100 persons on bail; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51089/17]

262. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the estimated cost of providing electronic tagging for 500 persons on bail; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51090/17]

263. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the estimated cost of providing electronic tagging for 1,000 persons on bail; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51091/17]

264. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the cost of providing electronic tagging for 2,000 persons on bail; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51092/17]

265. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the cost of providing electronic tagging for 2,500 persons on bail; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51093/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 260 to 265, inclusive, together.

I must inform the Deputy that I am not currently in a position to provide any estimates in relation to the costs outlined in his questions.

By way of some background, the Deputy will be aware that provisions in respect of electronic monitoring of persons on bail are currently contained in section 6B of the Bail Act 1997, but have not yet been commenced.

Section 7 of the Criminal Justice Act 2017, enacted on 28 June 2017, amends these existing provisions for the electronic monitoring of persons on bail to facilitate the focused and targeted use of monitoring in appropriate cases. The Act will provide that electronic monitoring may be imposed as a bail condition if the prosecution applies to the court for such a condition.

In parallel with the progress of the Act through the Oireachtas, a Working Group on Electronic Monitoring was established in my Department in December 2016. The Group, which has been tasked with examining a range of issues surrounding the implementation of electronic monitoring in an Irish context, is comprised of officials from the Department of Justice and Equality, the Irish Prison Service, the Probation Service, the Courts Service, An Garda Síochána and the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions.

It is anticipated that the Group will submit their final report to the Management Board of my Department in the near future. The Management Board will then consider the recommendations in the context of bringing the relevant legislative provisions into force.

The Deputy will be aware of the impact that speculation in relation to costs can have on commercial matters, particularly where there may be a requirement for a procurement process. In this context, I would expect that any recommendations made by the Working Group, which

have a cost element associated with them, would be fully examined by the Management Board and careful thought given to any procurement implications that might arise.

Accordingly, it would be inappropriate and unhelpful to engage in any such speculation at this stage.

Prison Service Data

266. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the cost per week of keeping a prisoner in jail; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51094/17]

267. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the annual cost of keeping a prisoner in jail; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51095/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 266 and 267 together.

I wish to inform the Deputy that the average annual cost of an available staffed prison space for 2016, the latest year for which a figure is available, was €69,421. This equates to an average weekly cost of €1,335.02 per available staffed prison space.

Prisoner Data

268. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons incarcerated in the State; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51098/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by the Irish Prison Service that the information requested by the Deputy is published daily on the Irish Prison Service website www.irishprisons.ie. The information can be found in the Information Centre – under Statistics and Information – Daily Prisoner Population.

Prison Service Data

269. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons incarcerated, by institution, in each of the years 2011 to 2016 and to date in 2017, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51099/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I can advise the Deputy that the number of persons committed by institution in each of the years 2011-2016 and to date in 2017 are set out in the tables below. Figures for 2017 are provisional. The number of commitments per year is higher than the number of persons due to the fact that a person may be committed more than once in that year.

	Year 2017	Year 2017	Year 2016	Year 2016	Year 2015	Year 2015	Year 2014	Year 2014
Com-mittal Prison	Persons	Com-mittals	Persons	Com-mittals	Persons	Com-mittals	Persons	Com-mittals

Questions - Written Answers

	Year 2017	Year 2017	Year 2016	Year 2016	Year 2015	Year 2015	Year 2014	Year 2014
Castlereagh Prison	689	798	1,279	1,471	1,339	1,547	1,467	1,705
Cloverhill Remand Prison	1,800	2309	2,025	2,604	1,953	2,640	2,017	2,629
Cork Prison	835	986	1,787	2,148	2,224	2,788	2,167	2,654
Limerick Prison (Female)	288	325	1,047	1,175	1,270	1,486	1,130	1,315
Limerick Prison (Male)	655	799	1,431	1,770	1,546	1,911	1,382	1,732
Midlands Prison	569	648	1,477	1,756	1,540	1,815	1,197	1,398
Mountjoy Prison (Female)	711	879	1,499	1,762	1,648	1,925	1,555	1,776
Mountjoy Prison (Male)	1,032	1217	1,871	2,218	2,366	2,724	1,941	2,284
Portlaoise Prison	24	25	28	29	29	31	21	24
St. Patrick's Institution	32	36	104	134	169	238	218	317
Wheatfield Prison	8	9	31	32	98	101	313	321
Total	6,643	8,031	12,579	15,099	14,182	17,206	13,408	16,155

	Year 2013	Year 2013	Year 2012	Year 2012	Year 2011	Year 2011
Committal Prison	Persons	Committals	Persons	Total	Persons	Committals
Castlereagh Prison	1,290	1,462	1,297	1,514	1,339	1,580

	Year 2013	Year 2013	Year 2012	Year 2012	Year 2011	Year 2011
Cloverhill Remand Prison	2,077	2,652	2,413	3,123	2,924	3,556
Cork Prison	2,229	2,787	2,185	2,798	2,032	2,600
Limerick Prison (Female)	957	1,152	788	959	606	730
Limerick Prison (Male)	1,380	1,703	1,331	1,681	1,395	1,797
Midlands Prison	878	1,017	975	1,101	876	1,046
Mountjoy Prison (Female)	1,369	1,575	1,363	1,601	1,296	1,508
Mountjoy Prison (Male)	1,395	1,583	1,863	2,158	1,926	2,394
Portlaoise Prison	32	37	23	27	21	22
St. Patrick's Institution	318	442	435	633	551	849
Wheatfield Prison	1,130	1,325	1,187	1,431	986	1,236
Total	13,055	15,735	13,860	17,026	13,952	17,318

Closed-Circuit Television Systems

270. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of Garda-controlled CCTV systems in place; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51101/17]

271. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the initial cost of a Garda-controlled CCTV system; the annual running cost of one; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51102/17]

272. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the average full cost of CCTV systems proposed by community groups seeking funding under the community-based scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51103/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 270 to 272, inclusive, together.

As the Deputy will be appreciate decisions in relation to the provision and allocation of Garda resources are a matter for the Garda Commissioner in the light of his identified operational demands and I, as Minister, have no direct role in the matter.

I have asked the Garda Commissioner for the specific information requested and when it is

to hand I will inform the Deputy accordingly.

Court Judgments

273. **Deputy Mick Barry** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will direct the Chief State Solicitor's Office to make an appropriate payment in view of the conclusion of a High Court case (details supplied). [51114/17]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am aware of the case to which the Deputy refers.

I note that no actual award was made by the Supreme Court in the case. There was a suggestion that the State make an ex-gratia payment. No final decision has been made on how the matter will be resolved and I am informed that the Garda Síochána and the Chief State Solicitor's Office are still considering how to advance the issues.

Commemorative Events

274. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht her plans to invite a representative from the main Unionist and Alliance parties in the North to participate in the All Party Consultation Committee on Commemorations (details supplied). [50764/17]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys): I can advise the Deputy that I intend to write to the leaders of the Democratic Unionist Party, the Ulster Unionist Party and the Alliance Party to invite each of them to nominate a representative to join the All Party Consultation Committee on Commemorations.

Údarás na Gaeltachta Funding

275. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the budget allocations capital and current for Údarás na Gaeltachta in 2016, 2017 and 2018 in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50943/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Joe McHugh): The information sought by the Deputy is outlined in the table.

Year	Capital - €m	Current(Admin) - €m	Current(Programmes) - €m	Total - €m
2016	9.087*	8.823	3.0	20.910
2017	8.187**	8.958	3.250	20.395
2018	7.000	9.237	3.350	19.587

* An additional capital allocation of €2.4m, arising from savings elsewhere in the Department's Vote was secured for an tÚdarás in 2016 and is included in the figure provided.

** An additional capital allocation of €1.5m, arising from savings elsewhere in the Department's Vote has been secured for an tÚdarás to date, in 2017 and is included in the figure provided.

Foras na Gaeilge

276. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the budget allocations, capital and current, to Foras na Gaeilge in 2016, 2017 and 2018; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50944/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Joe McHugh): I would like to remind the Deputy that, as an agency of An Foras Teanga, the North/South Language Body, funding is provided to Foras na Gaeilge from my Department (75%) and the Department for Communities in Northern Ireland (25%) in accordance with budgets approved by the North/South Ministerial Council (NSMC). My Department also provides further ongoing funding to Foras na Gaeilge in respect of ringfenced activities relating to Clár na Leabhar Gaeilge and Colmcille. Budget allocations to Foras na Gaeilge are in respect of current expenditure only.

My Department provided overall current funding of €12.528m to Foras na Gaeilge in 2016, comprising the Department's share of the NSMC budget, ringfenced funding for Clár na Leabhar Gaeilge and Colmcille in addition to additional unmatched funding for one-off projects outside of the NSMC approved business plan.

In regard to 2017, as the Deputy will appreciate, it has not been possible to date to have Foras na Gaeilge's business plan and budget formally approved by the NSMC. Therefore, as an interim measure, it was been agreed to proceed with an indicative budget based on the 2016 NSMC approved budget. In that context, I can inform the Deputy that an overall indicative provision of €13.989m was provided within my Department's Vote for 2017 in respect of both agencies of An Foras Teanga, representing an increase of €0.788m over the Estimates provision in 2016. This increased funding was approved in the context of the significant cutbacks in recent years and to meet current challenges, in particular the one-off costs associated with Foras na Gaeilge's move to a new headquarters in 2017.

Similarly, the position regarding the NSMC 2018 budget for Foras na Gaeilge is not clear at this point in time. However, I can inform the Deputy that an overall indicative provision of €14.028m has been provided within my Department's Vote for 2018 in respect of both agencies of An Foras Teanga. This increased funding includes a provision for Bliain na Gaeilge 2018.

Irish Language

277. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the budget allocations, capital and current, for the 20-year language strategy in 2016, 2017 and 2018, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50945/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Joe McHugh): The 20-Year Strategy for the Irish language 2010-2030 is a cross governmental initiative not just limited to the programmes administered by my Department. It encompasses State interventions in many sectors including, but not limited to education from early years to 3rd level, broadcasting, enterprise development, language technology and specific language legislation such as the Official Languages legislation and the Gaeltacht Act 2012.

Regarding my own Department's interventions, the 2016, 2017 and 2018 current budget allocations to specifically support the progression of the language planning process under the terms of the Gaeltacht Act 2012 as a key element of the Strategy are set out in the table.

	2016	2017	2018
Allocation	€ 1m	€1.25m	€ 2.65m

In addition to this specific allocation for language planning, the annual budgetary allocation made to my Department in support of the Irish language is deployed on an ongoing basis in support of the Strategy's key objectives. In that regard, the table below sets out the funding provided (capital and current) in 2016, 2017 and 2018 in respect of the Irish language and the Gaeltacht:

	2016€m	2017€m	2018€m
Irish Language, Gaeltacht and Islands	51.206	46.613	48.567
Foras Teanga	13.201	13.989	14.028
Total	64.407	60.602	62.595

Health Services

278. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 317 of 17 October 2017, if the matter regarding an organisation (details supplied) will be addressed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50888/17]

304. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 317 of 17 October 2017, if the matter regarding an organisation (details supplied) will be addressed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50889/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 278 and 304 together.

As this is a service matter, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible in relation to the specific funding issue raised in this case.

General Practitioner Services

279. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Health the number of children who are eligible for general practitioner visit cards. [50983/17]

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.

Medical Card Data

280. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Health the number of children who are eligible for medical cards. [50984/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply.

Hospital Appointments Status

281. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health when a hip operation will be facilitated in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50737/17]

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.

Medical Card Drugs Availability

282. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Health if Versatis patches have been removed from prescribed medications under the medical card scheme; if so, the reason therefor; the replacement for same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50743/17]

341. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Minister for Health the reason the prescription patch Versatis, which was previously available under the medical card scheme for all persons prescribed this patch, is now only available under the medical card scheme for those being treated for shingles despite positive and essential results for other persons; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51167/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 282 and 341 together.

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.

HSE Correspondence

283. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Health the reason correspondence coming from Our Lady's Hospital, Cashel to persons has on its letterhead Our Lady's Campus, Cashel rather than Our Lady's Hospital, Cashel; if this is part of a downgrading of Our Lady's Hospital, Cashel; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50761/17]

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

284. **Deputy Bobby Aylward** asked the Minister for Health the date for the re-opening of beds at a hospital (details supplied) following receipt of Health Information and Quality Authority registration; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50769/17]

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.

Respite Care Grant Administration

285. **Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Health if a specific allowance which is being made available in a certain location for respite care (details supplied) can be used to avail of respite care in a suitable nursing home. [50778/17]

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.

Services for People with Disabilities

286. **Deputy Fiona O’Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health the status of residential care for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50780/17]

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 Waiting Lists

287. **Deputy Eugene Murphy** asked the Minister for Health if a person (details supplied) can secure an urgent sleep study appointment in Merlin Park University Hospital, Galway in view of serious health concerns and retention of employment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50783/17]

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 the Deputy directly.

Nursing Home Beds Data

288. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Health the number of nursing home

spaces available in County Meath; the number of persons on the waiting lists for these nursing homes; the average wait time for those waiting; the longest wait time; and his plans to increase the number of spaces available [50784/17]

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 Reviews

289. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health if a review of a medical card can be undertaken in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50805/17]

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.

Assisted Human Reproduction

290. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Minister for Health the policy regarding surrogacy and the rights and entitlements of new parents via surrogacy to avail of social welfare and health services support; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50813/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): On Tuesday 3 October 2017 the Government approved the drafting of a Bill on assisted human reproduction (AHR) and associated areas of research. Officials in my Department are engaging with the Office of the Attorney General in relation to the process of drafting this Bill. The General Scheme is published on the Department's website and has been submitted to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Health for review.

The specific provisions relating to surrogacy are outlined in Part 6 of the General Scheme. These provisions outline the specific conditions under which surrogacy in Ireland will be permitted, including a prohibition on commercial surrogacy and a requirement for all surrogacy agreements to be pre-authorised by the AHR Regulatory Authority. The Scheme also sets out a court-based mechanism through which the parentage of a child born through surrogacy may be transferred from the surrogate (and her husband, if applicable) to the intending parent(s).

All persons who are ordinarily resident in the State have eligibility for health services as provided in the 1970 Health Act (as amended). The rights and entitlements of new parents via surrogacy to avail of social welfare is a matter for the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection.

Patient Safety

291. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health if all maternity units are complying with the obligation to publish a monthly maternity patient safety statement; if not, the hospitals which have never submitted a monthly maternity patient safety statement; and the hospitals which failed to publish a monthly maternity patient safety statement in each of the months December 2015 to date in 2017. [50816/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Since March 2016, Maternity Patient Safety Statements have been published on a monthly basis by maternity hospitals/units. These statements represent a key building block to provide assurance regarding the safety of our maternity services.

The *National Women & Infants Health Programme* has been established to lead the management, organisation and delivery of maternity, gynaecology and neonatal services, strengthening such services by bringing together work that is currently undertaken across primary, community and acute care. This work includes the oversight and monitoring of the safety statements. I have asked the Programme to reply to the Deputy directly concerning maternity hospitals/units' compliance with the relevant targets for publication of the statements.

Hospitals Funding

292. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health if funding and resources will be made available to facilitate additional spinal fusion operations for children with scoliosis before Christmas 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50818/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond to the Deputy directly.

Health Services Staff Recruitment

293. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Health when the HSE expects to replace the ophthalmologist in Bindon Street clinic, Ennis, County Clare; the implications this doctor's departure has had on waiting lists; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50823/17]

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.

Ministerial Meetings

294. **Deputy Michael Harty** asked the Minister for Health if he has met consultants at Merlin Park University Hospital regarding the need for investment following roof leaks that closed two operating theatres; the outcome of the meeting regarding all suspended procedures; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50830/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I can confirm that I and officials from my Department met with representatives of the Saolta University Health Care Group, including two Consultants, and national HSE representatives on 4 October 2017 regarding the closure of the two orthopaedic theatres at Merlin Park University Hospital.

I understand from information supplied by the Saolta Group that the Orthopaedic Waiting List Office at Merlin Park has been actively communicating with patients to manage the situation, and where possible, patients are being accommodated at University Hospital Galway.

Work commenced on the roof repair on 31 October and the Saolta Group advise that HSE Estates have sought emergency capital funding to progress the remedial works in Merlin Park, and the estimate of time to complete the works is 4 – 6 weeks, weather dependant.

A tendering process is also progressing for the procurement of a temporary theatre facility as a matter of urgency, to enable the reinstatement of the elective orthopaedic service. I have requested an update from the HSE and asked that they respond directly to you in this regard.

General Medical Services Scheme

295. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Health if blood tests which are carried out by general practitioners are covered free under the medical card scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50831/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): There is no provision under the GMS GP contract for persons who hold a medical card or GP visit card to be charged for routine phlebotomy services provided by their GP, or the practice nurse on behalf of the GP, which are required to either assist in the diagnosis of illness or the treatment of a condition. The HSE has advised GPs that where a blood test forms part of the investigation or necessary treatment of a patient's symptoms or conditions, this should be free of charge for patients who hold a medical card or GP visit card. Notwithstanding this, I am aware that in recent times some GPs have begun to charge GMS patients for phlebotomy services in some circumstances.

This is a matter of concern for me as it has long been the position, under successive Governments, that no user charges should apply to GP services provided to GMS and GP visit card patients. If a patient who holds a medical card or GP visit card believes he or she has been incorrectly charged for routine phlebotomy services by his or her GP, then that patient may take the matter up with the HSE Local Health Office, who will deal with the matter in accordance with the HSE's Complaints Policy.

In order to achieve clarity on this issue, I have asked that any difference of perspective in relation to the provision of phlebotomy services be addressed in the GP contractual review process, which is currently underway. The aim is to develop a contract which has a population health focus, providing in particular for health promotion and disease prevention and for the structured ongoing care of chronic conditions. I look forward to constructive and positive engagements with a view to achieving a satisfactory outcome.

Hospitals Capital Programme

296. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Health his views on the provision of capital funding for Phase 3C of Naas General Hospital, Naas, County Kildare, from the additional capital allocation of €471 million announced under the mid-term capital review; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50840/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Health capital funding was outlined in the recently published Public Service Estimates for 2018 and the HSE is currently developing its Capital Plan for 2018 - 2021.

The Government is also preparing a new 10 year National Investment Plan for the period 2018-2027, which is expected to be published by the end of the year alongside and in support of the forthcoming new National Planning Framework, to sustain national economic and social progress over the long term.

My Department has asked the HSE to reply directly to the Deputy in respect of proposed capital developments at Naas General Hospital.

HSE Funding

297. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health if he will address a matter (details supplied); the reason for the refusal of the application by a charity for an education officer and information officer; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50845/17]

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.

Dental Services Provision

298. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health if he will address a matter regarding the lack of dental treatment under the primary dental programme at a school (details supplied); his plans to address this issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50846/17]

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.

Health Services

299. **Deputy Michael Lowry** asked the Minister for Health if he will request the HSE to provide generators to persons in their homes who need continuous access to electricity for their medical supports; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50849/17]

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 Consultant Contracts

300. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health his plans to implement a system of clocking in for consultants in hospitals to prevent the abuses revealed by a programme (details supplied) which have led to some consultants being paid tens of thousands of euro for work they did not do and to increased wait times for persons in public hospitals. [50853/17]

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. The framework for the regulation of a consultant's private practice is contained in Section 20 of Consultant Contract 2008. It provides that the public to private practice ratio is to be implemented through the Clinical Directorate structure. It also gives the employer of the consultant concerned full authority to take all necessary steps

to ensure a Consultant's practice shall not exceed the agreed ratio of public to private practice.

However it is 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 the responsibility of management to make sure these contracts are being enforced and to put in place structures that support compliance. 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. It is a matter for the HSE and hospital management to determine whether a system of clocking in for consultants should be part of these structures.

In the longer term I have established an independent group, chaired by Dr Donal de Buitléir, to examine the impact of separating private practice from the public hospital system. This was one of the key recommendations of the Sláintecare Report.

Health Services Staff Remuneration

301. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Health if he will examine the situation of health care workers that work for section 39 organisations and are not directly paid by the HSE and therefore will not be paid increases to be paid to workers in HSE employment; and if there is a provision for funding for section 39 organisations to be increased to allow for pro rata increases for staff. [50857/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Under section 39 of the Health Act 2004, the HSE has in place Service Level Agreements with voluntary providers which set out the level of service to be provided for the grant to the individual organisation. Any individuals employed by these section 39 organisations are not HSE employees, therefore neither the HSE nor the Minister have a role in determining the salaries or other terms and conditions applying to these staff.

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 which is provided for under the more recent Public Service Agreements. 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.

National Treatment Purchase Fund Data

302. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 157 of 22 November 2017, if he will request the NTPF to ensure that the public or private status of patients on hospital waiting lists is collected in all future audits of waiting lists in order to achieve a full picture in respect of the problems already identified; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50860/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The key functions of the National Treatment Purchase Fund include arranging for the provision of hospital treatment to those patients waiting longest for treatment and collecting, collating and validating information on public patients waiting for public hospital treatment.

The NTPF has advised that its role does not currently include the audit of patients waiting for treatment privately.

Hospital Consultant Contracts

303. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 174 of 22 November 2017, the person or body responsible for ensuring compliance with the consultants contract; if it is the hospital groups or a designated person within the HSE; if he will provide all data available to him on such compliance in each of the past three years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50861/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The framework for the regulation of a consultant's private practice is contained in Section 20 of Consultant Contract 2008. It provides that the public to private practice ratio is to be implemented through the Clinical Directorate structure. It also gives the employer of the consultant concerned full authority to take all necessary steps to ensure a consultant's practice shall not exceed the agreed ratio of public to private practice.

The HSE collects and reports information from HIPE monthly, in arrears, in relation to the percentage of public and private work being undertaken at each Hospital on an elective in-patient basis and on a day-case basis. I have asked the HSE to revert to the Deputy in relation to the provision of all data available on compliance in each of the past three years.

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.

Question No. 304 answered with Question No. 278.

Protected Disclosures

305. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 323 of 10 October 2017, if the disclosure been processed in accordance with his Department's policy and legislation; if the person that made the disclosure through the Deputy has been interviewed; if his Department and the HSE have protected this person in their place of employment in accordance with the legislation; the reason details cannot be divulged while at the same time protecting the confidential nature of the process; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50890/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As previously advised, all protected disclosures submitted to my Department are given due attention in keeping with my Department's protected disclosures policy and procedures and in accordance with the requirements under the Protected Disclosures Act 2014. Given that all protected disclosures must be treated as confidential, it is therefore not appropriate for me to comment in detail on a specific case. However, I understand that this particular case has been assessed by my officials in accordance with the requirements of the legislation and a letter has been sent to you outlining the current position. I understand the person was not interviewed by my Department, but my Department has assessed the case based on the written material submitted.

I can confirm that I have discharged the obligations that are owed to the discloser by me,

that I have treated the correspondence received as confidential and protected the identity of the discloser.

Disability Services Data

306. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons that have transferred from congregated settings to community living to date in 2017; and the number of additional homes provided. [50896/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): The HSE's report "Time to Move on from Congregated Settings – A Strategy for Community Inclusion" (2011) proposes a new model of support in the community by moving people from institutional settings to the community. The plan is being rolled out at a regional and local level and involves full consultation with stakeholders.

The Programme for Government contains a commitment to continue to move people with disabilities out of congregated settings, to enable them to live independently and to be included in the community. In May 2016, 2725 people lived in congregated settings and our objective is to reduce this figure by one-third by 2021 and ultimately, to eliminate all congregated settings.

The HSE has established a subgroup, under 'Transforming Lives', the Programme to implement the recommendations of the Value for Money and Policy Review of Disability Services, which is developing an implementation plan for moving people from institutions.

At the end of December 2016, less than 2,600 people with a disability were living in congregated settings. The HSE's 2017 National Service Plan has set a target of 223 to move from institutions in 2017. This will ensure that people are able to move out of congregated settings, and into their own homes in the community.

As the HSE is responsible for leading out on the recommendations on "Time to Move on from Congregated Settings - A Strategy for Community Inclusion", I have arranged for the Deputy's question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

Speech and Language Therapy Staff

307. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Health the number of additional whole time equivalent speech and language therapists newly employed by the HSE to date in 2017; and the sectors of the HSE in which they are employed. [50897/17]

308. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Health the number of additional whole time equivalent occupational therapists newly employed by the HSE to date in 2017; and the sectors of the HSE in which they are employed. [50898/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 307 and 308 together.

I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly on this matter.

Services for People with Disabilities

309. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Health the locations of the 185 new residential emergency places provided under disability services in 2017, in tabular form. [50899/17]

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.

Disability Services Data

310. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Health the number of children's disability network teams established. [50900/17]

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 a service matter, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

Disability Services Data

311. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Health the number of adults with a physical and-or sensory disability in receipt of a personal assistant service as of 1 November 2017 or the latest date available. [50901/17]

312. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons with a disability (details supplied) in receipt of home support services as of 1 November 2017 or the latest date available. [50902/17]

332. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the estimated full year cost of providing an additional one and a half million personal assistant hours for persons with disabilities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51151/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): I propose to take Questions Nos. 311, 312 and 332 together.

The Government is committed to protecting the level of Personal Assistant and Home Support Services available to people with disabilities. In 2017, the Health Service Executive's (HSE's) priority is to provide 1.4 million hours of Personal Assistance to more than 2,000 people with disabilities, which is an increase of 100,000 hours over the 2016 target. The HSE

will also provide 2.75 million hours of Home Support to adults and children with disabilities, an increase of 150,000 hours over the 2016 target.

As the Deputies' questions relate to service matters, I have referred the questions to the HSE for direct replies to the Deputies.

Hospital Appointments Delays

313. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health if a hospital appointment for a person (details supplied) will be expedited; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50905/17]

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.

Emergency Departments Waiting Times

314. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health if persons that are aged 75 years or over have experienced an emergency department wait time more than 24 hours to date in 2017; and, if so, the hospital in which that wait occurred. [50907/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

Nursing Home Fees

315. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the estimated full year cost of amending the fees charged under the NHSS to enable nursing home residents with an assessed weekly income of €300 or less to retain a minimum of €60 weekly. [51134/17]

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.

Hospitals Expenditure

316. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the estimated full year cost current and capital of providing a mobile catheterisation laboratory for Waterford University Hospital. [51135/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Mobile Cath Lab was deployed for the short term provision of cardiac diagnostic angiogram services on the grounds of University Hospital Waterford from 2 October 2017 for a period of 20 weeks i.e. until end of week commencing 12 February 2018. The Mobile Cath Lab is providing a scheduled diagnostic angiography service on a 3 day per week basis. The estimated cost of the temporary additional service is €800,000 for the 20 weeks.

Hospitals Expenditure

317. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the estimated full year running costs of opening all medical assessment units on a seven day basis. [51136/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Programme for a Partnership Government recognises the contribution of Medical Assessment Units (MAUs), Urgent Care Clinics and Minor Injury Clinics in providing a safe and local alternative to Emergency Departments.

My Department is committed to undertaking a Review of these services, as outlined in the Programme for a Partnership Government. Initial scoping work on the Review is progressing in 2017, and will continue moving into 2018, with a view to extending their hours of opening and weekend opening.

Currently my Department does not have details of the estimated costs of opening all medical assessment units on a seven day basis.

Hospital Consultant Recruitment

318. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the estimated full-year cost of recruiting an extra 500 hospital consultants; and the average estimated cost for support staff required per consultant. [51137/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly on this matter.

Nursing Staff Recruitment

319. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the estimated full-year cost of recruiting an additional 4,000 nursing staff. [51138/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly on this matter.

Prescriptions Charges

320. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the estimated full-year cost of abolishing prescription charges. [51139/17]

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.

General Practitioner Services

321. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the estimated full-year cost of increasing the general practitioner rural practice allowance to €25,000. [51140/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Regulations were signed by the then Minister for Health on 5 May 2016 which provide for the introduction of the new Rural Practice Support Framework (RPSF), which includes improved qualifying criteria for rural support and an increase in the financial allowance from €16,216.07 to €20,000 per annum. Under the new Framework, if two practice units are providing general practitioner services in the same qualifying area, both practices may qualify for a modified allowance of €10,000. GPs holding a permanent GMS contract who received the Rural Practice Allowance of €16,216.07 immediately prior to the introduction of the new Regulations who do not meet the new qualifying criteria continue to receive the payment on a personal basis, provided they retain their contractual commitment to the remote rural area.

As at 27 November 2017, there are 249 practice units in receipt of rural supports under the RPSF. 175 practices receive the financial allowance of €20,000 and 18 practices receive the modified allowance of €10,000. The full year cost of increasing the existing allowance to €25,000 and the corresponding modified allowance to €12,500 for these practices would amount to approximately €920,000. It must be emphasised that this estimate does not take account of any future increase in the number of qualifying practices. In addition, any increase in the financial allowance under the new RPSF would only apply to those practices that qualify under the new criteria, therefore these calculations have excluded the 56 GPs who currently receive the old financial allowance of €16,216.07.

National Maternity Strategy Implementation

322. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the estimated full-year cost of implementing the national maternity strategy. [51141/17]

337. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the status of the national maternity strategy; and the additional extra funding that will be required for its implementation. [51156/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 322 and 337 together.

Implementation of Ireland's first National Maternity Strategy - Creating A Better Future Together 2016 - 2026 - will be led by the National Women & Infants Health Programme. To this end, the Programme has developed a detailed Implementation Plan which I was pleased to launch last month. The Plan is presented under the Strategy's four strategic priorities and details how each of the 77 actions will be implemented. It represents another essential building block to provide a consistently safe and high quality maternity service.

The Programme has estimated that full implementation of the Strategy will cost in the re-

gion of an additional €80 million revenue funding over the lifetime of the Strategy. Work to identify the precise capital funding requirement is ongoing. The Strategy will be implemented on a phased basis over the coming years and therefore the funding requirement will vary from year to year. In that context, the Implementation Plan will inform the annual Estimates process each year.

I can confirm that additional funding will be provided for the Strategy in 2018, the detail of which will be set out in the National Service Plan 2018.

Home Help Service Data

323. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the estimated full-year cost of providing an additional 2.2 million home help hours. [51142/17]

324. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the estimated full-year cost of providing an additional 5,000 home care packages. [51143/17]

333. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the estimated full-year cost of providing an additional 200 intensive home care packages for persons with dementia; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51152/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 323, 324 and 333 together.

In budget 2018 a further €37 million has been made available for older people services, comprising €5m once-off funding in 2017 and €32 million next year, to further strengthen supports for older people, particularly to facilitate speedier discharge from acute hospitals over the winter period. A significant proportion of this additional funding will go towards home care services.

As the specific costings requested by the Deputy are service matters I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Mental Health Services Expenditure

325. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the estimated full-year cost of completing the recruitment required for the full implementation of A Vision for Change. [51144/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): Within the HSE, the Mental Health Division's staff numbers (based on April 2017 data) totals 9,815 WTEs. In addition, there are a further 1000 indirect WTE staff providing services. There are also approximately 300 being recruited and more than 700 posts are approved and in development from Programme for Government funding.

The full cost of recruitment to staff community teams in Mental Health Services in the nine Community Health Organisations as set out in 'A Vision for Change' is set out in the table below:

Recruitment	
Current Staffing (excluding indirect staff but including staff recruitment and the Programme for Government)	10,815

Recruitment	
Proposed staffing levels envisaged by 'Vision for Change'	12,778
Gap between current and Vision	1,963
Estimated Cost based on average staff payment of €65,000 (including PRSI and related costs)	€127,595,000

Drugs Payment Scheme

326. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the estimated full-year cost of reducing the drug payment threshold to €100. [51145/17]

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.

Speech and Language Therapy Staff

327. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the full-year cost of recruiting an additional 200 speech and language therapists. [51146/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly on this matter.

Occupational Therapy Staff

328. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the full-year cost of recruiting an additional 200 occupational therapists. [51147/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly on this matter.

Health Services Staff Recruitment

329. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the full-year cost of recruiting an additional 200 physiotherapists. [51148/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly on this matter.

Health Services Staff Recruitment

330. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the full-year cost of recruiting an additional 50 dental surgeons. [51149/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly on this matter.

Ambulance Service

331. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the estimated capital cost of providing an additional emergency ambulance fleet; and the full-year costs of additional personnel required for its staffing. [51150/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

Question No. 332 answered with Question No. 311.

Question No. 333 answered with Question No. 323.

General Practitioner Services Provision

334. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health his Department's estimated full-year cost of providing free general practitioner care to all the population. [51153/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The framework under which general practitioners are remunerated for the provision of services to holders of a medical card or GP visit card is comprised of a number of elements, principally an annual capitation payment per patient, additional fee-per-service payments and a range of practice supports. To estimate the cost of the provision of care free at the point of use to the full population would require a detailed modelling exercise.

The Deputy will be aware that the Report of the Committee on the Future of Healthcare which was published on 30 May 2017 recommended the phased introduction of universal GP care over the next five years. I have consistently supported the work of the cross-party Committee, and welcomed the level of consensus and stakeholder support that it has attracted. Work is underway within my Department to develop a detailed response to the Sláintecare Report.

Hospital Beds Data

335. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the full year cost of providing an additional 100 critical care beds. [51154/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond to you directly.

Neuro-Rehabilitation Services Data

336. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost of providing an additional 150 inpatient rehabilitation beds. [51155/17]

340. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the number of staff in community neuro-rehabilitation teams in each community healthcare organisation; the specific medical or health care posts in each team in each community health care organisation; and the estimated full year cost of providing a full neuro-rehabilitation team in each CHO, in tabular form [51166/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): I propose to take Questions Nos. 336 and 340 together.

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 the Deputy's questions relates to a service matter, I have arranged for the questions to be referred to the Health Service Executive for a direct reply to the Deputy.

Question No. 337 answered with Question No. 322.

Nursing Home Services

338. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Health his plans for investment in Abbeyleix nursing unit in County Laois; the extensions and upgrades planned; the timeframe for these; the provision being made in terms of the funding for these works; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51157/17]

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 Waiting Lists

339. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health when required surgery will be facilitated in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51159/17]

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.

Question No. 340 answered with Question No. 336.

Question No. 341 answered with Question No. 282.

Health Services Data

342. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons in each CHO waiting for a podiatry appointment in primary care; the numbers waiting 0 to 12 weeks, 12 to 26 weeks, 26 to 52 weeks and the numbers waiting more than 52 weeks. [51179/17]

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.

Health Services Data

343. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons in each CHO waiting for a ophthalmology appointment in primary care; the numbers waiting 0 to 12 weeks, 12 to 26 weeks, 26 to 52 weeks and the numbers waiting more than 52 weeks. [51180/17]

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.

Health Services Data

344. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons in each CHO waiting for a dietetics appointment in primary care; the numbers waiting 0 to 12 weeks, 12 to 26 weeks, 26 to 52 weeks and the numbers waiting more than 52 weeks. [51181/17]

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.

Health Services Data

345. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons in each CHO waiting for a oral health appointment in primary care; the numbers waiting 0 to 12 weeks, 12 to 26 weeks, 26 to 52 weeks and the numbers waiting more than 52 weeks. [51182/17]

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.

Primary Care Centres Data

346. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the primary care centre projects announced on 17 July 2012, in tabular form; the status of same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51185/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Delivery of primary care infrastructure is a dynamic process, which evolves to take account of changing circumstances including the feasibility of implementation.

The table below gives details of the 35 locations announced on 17 July 2012, and their current status including estimated opening dates. Two of these primary care centres are already operational and five are projected to open by the end of 2017 or early next year, and a further ten in 2018.

Questions - Written Answers

In addition, it should be noted that 61 primary care centres have been opened since 2011, and a further 8 primary care centres are projected to open in 2017 or early 2018, in addition to those shown in the table below.

Count	HSE Region	County	Location/ PCT Name	Delivery Method	Project Sta- tus - Q3 2017
1	DML	Dublin	Rowlagh / North Clondalkin	Direct build	Stage 2a design team report completed. Purchase agreement finalised with adjoining school, subject to planning permission being granted for the development. Planning application expected to be lodged by end of 2017.
2	DML	Dublin	Curlew Road / Crumlin / Drimnagh	Direct build	Planning permission in place
3	DML	Dublin	Knocklyon / Rathfarnham	Direct build	Planning permission in place
4	DML	Wicklow	Rathdrum	Operational Lease	Planning approved. HSE has finalised layouts. Construction expected to be completed Q3 2018.
5	DML	Kildare	Kilcock	PPP	In construction. Projected opening 2018
6	DNE	Dublin	Coolock / Darndale	PPP	In construction. Projected opening 2018

Count	HSE Region	County	Location/ PCT Name	Delivery Method	Project Sta- tus - Q3 2017
7	DNE	Dublin	Summerhill, north inner city Dublin	PPP	In construc- tion. Project- ed opening 2018
8	DNE	Dublin	Balbriggan	Operational Lease	Operational Q3 2017
9	DNE	Dublin	Swords	Operational Lease	Preferred bidder se- lected. Letter of Intent is- sued August 2017.
10	DNE	Louth	Drogheda north	Operational Lease	Existing building re- quires fitout. Projected completion Q1 2018 and operational Q2 2018.
11	DNE	Meath	Laytown and Bettystown	Operational Lease	Project is progressing as opera- tional lease. Schedule of accommoda- tion under review
12	DNE	Meath	Kells	Operational Lease	Operational since Q1 2016
13	DNE	Monaghan	Carrick- macross	Operational Lease	Letter of Intent issued. Progressing Agreement for Lease.
14	South	Carlow	Tullow / Rathvilly / Hacketstown	Direct build	Adjoining landowner has re-en- gaged with HSE. Op- tions being reviewed.
15	South	Kilkenny	Kilkenny city (East)	Operational Lease	Letter of Intent issued. Layouts be- ing reviewed.

Questions - Written Answers

Count	HSE Region	County	Location/ PCT Name	Delivery Method	Project Sta- tus - Q3 2017
16	South	Wexford	Wexford town	PPP	In Construc- tion. Project- ed opening 2018
17	South	Waterford	Dungarvan	PPP	In Construc- tion. Project- ed opening 2018
18	South	Waterford	Waterford city (east)	PPP	In Construc- tion. Project- ed opening 2018
19	South	Cork	Cork city - Ballyphe- hane/Togher/ Greenmount/ The Lough	Operational Lease	Letter of Intent issued. Layouts being devel- oped.
20	South	Kerry	Tralee	Operational Lease	Letter of Intent issued. Layouts be- ing reviewed. Planning application submitted.
21	South	Tipperary	Carrick-on- Suir	PPP	In Construc- tion. Project- ed opening 2018
22	South	Tipperary	Clonmel	Operational Lease	Reviewing accommoda- tion require- ments before progressing to stage 3. Existing HSE facilities be- ing reviewed.
23	West	Tipperary	Thurles	Operational Lease	Letter of Intent issued. Agreement for Lease signed.

Count	HSE Region	County	Location/ PCT Name	Delivery Method	Project Sta- tus - Q3 2017
24	West	Limerick	Limerick city (Ballinacurra/Weston)	PPP	Construc- tion nearing completion. Projected opening late 2017/early 2018.
25	West	Clare	Ennis	Operational Lease	Stage 3 of the Opera- tional Lease process. Priced offers to be re- viewed.
26	West	Galway	Tuam	PPP	Construc- tion nearing completion. Projected opening late 2017.
27	West	Galway	Gort	Operational Lease	Letter of Intent withdrawn 24/05/2016. Possible re-advertise- ment.
28	West	Roscommon	Boyle	PPP	Construc- tion nearing completion. Projected opening late 2017/early 2018.
29	West	Roscommon	Ballaghader- een	Operational Lease	Letter of Intent issued 27/10/2015. Project pro- gressing to Agreement for Lease.
30	West	Mayo	Westport	PPP	In Construc- tion. Project- ed opening 2018

Questions - Written Answers

Count	HSE Region	County	Location/ PCT Name	Delivery Method	Project Sta- tus - Q3 2017
31	West	Mayo	Claremorris	PPP	Construc- tion nearing completion. Projected opening late 2017/early 2018.
32	West	Sligo	Ballymote	PPP	Construc- tion nearing completion. Projected opening late 2017/early 2018.
33	West	Donegal	Dungloe - An Clochán Liath	Operational Lease	Re-adver- tised for Operational Lease option. Expressions of interest received.
34	West	Donegal	Donegal town	Operational Lease	Expressions of interest received. Currently be- ing reviewed

Coolock and Darndale were announced as two separate locations

The mechanism and timescale for delivery of primary care centres is dependent on a number of factors. Some of these factors are outside the control of the Health Service Executive. Regardless of the delivery mechanism, all potential primary care infrastructure is subject to suitable locations being offered/provided/available, to successful planning processes and GP commitment to sharing accommodation and delivering health care services with HSE staff. In addition the operational lease mechanism is subject to market pressures such as the developers' access to adequate financing.

Patient Data

347. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the percentage of serious reportable events being notified within 24 hours to a designated officer. [51186/17]

348. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the percentage of mandatory investigations that commence within 48 hours of the events occurring. [51187/17]

349. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the percentage of mandatory investigations that are completed within four months of notification of the events occurring. [51188/17]

350. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the percentage of reportable events in 2017 that were reported within 30 days of occurrence to the designated officer. [51189/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 347 to 350, inclusive, together.

As these are service matters the questions have been referred to the HSE for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

The Department of Health takes the management of patient safety very seriously and the establishment of the National Patient Safety Office (NPSO) is just one of a number of patient safety reforms agreed by Government in November 2015. The Office is overseeing a programme of patient safety measures including progressing a programme of legislation. The General Scheme of the Health Information and Patient Safety Bill approved by Government in November 2015 provides for the extension of the Health Information and Quality Authority's (HIQA's) remit to the private sector, mandatory external reporting of Serious Reportable Events and measures to promote clinical audit. The Bill has undergone pre-legislative scrutiny (PLS) with the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Health and the PLS Report is currently being considered by the Department. The Patient Safety Licencing Bill will introduce a regulatory regime for all hospitals as well as certain designated high risk activities. The Department of Justice and Equality's Civil Liability Amendment Act 2017 includes provision for the open disclosure of patient safety incidents.

In addition, on 25 October 2017, I launched the *National Standards on the Conduct of Reviews of Patient Safety Incidents*. These standards, developed jointly by HIQA and the Mental Health Commission, set out a new approach to the way health providers respond to, review and investigate incidents in order to determine as quickly as possible what may have transpired, and why, to ensure that they can immediately implement any improvements necessary to prevent a re-occurrence.

Finally, it is my understanding that the Health Service Executive (HSE) is currently finalising the review of its Safety Incident Management Policy.

Ambulance Service Data

351. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the number of ambulance attendances at each emergency department nationwide in September 2017; the number of such ambulances that waited longer than of 20 minutes to hand over patients, get their trolleys back and return to responding to calls; the number that waited longer than 40 minutes, 60 minutes, 90 minutes 120 minutes and 180 minutes for same, in tabular form. [51190/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

Hospital Admissions

352. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the number of operations that have been cancelled or postponed in each public hospital to date in 2017, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51191/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I fully acknowledge the distress and inconvenience for patients and their families when elective procedures are cancelled.

Maintaining scheduled care access for all patients is a key priority for hospitals, and balancing this with emergency demand at times is challenging. However, all efforts are made by hospitals to limit cancellations particularly for clinically urgent procedures.

Cancellation of elective procedures can occur for a variety of exceptional reasons including cancellations because a bed or the clinical team are not available, cancellations by the patient or because the patient may not be fit for surgery at the time.

Based on data provided by the NTPF, collated from reports by hospitals, approximately 3,400 elective procedures, on average, are cancelled per month. However, this must be seen in context. In 2016, typically in a month, there were approximately 53,000 admissions to acute hospitals on a daycase and an inpatient basis.

It is essential that hospitals continue to improve how they manage, and balance, the demand for emergency care with the planning of elective procedures, to minimise the impact on patients. In addition, the HSE continues to improve its processes to minimise the number sessions lost when patients cancel or do not attend for their procedures.

The Department of Health has commenced a Health Service Capacity review in line with the Programme for Government commitment, the findings of which are due to be published before the end of the year.

In response to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

Voluntary Hospital Sector

353. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the number of operations that have been cancelled or postponed in each voluntary hospital to date in 2017, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51192/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I fully acknowledge the distress and inconvenience for patients and their families when elective procedures are cancelled.

Maintaining scheduled care access for all patients is a key priority for hospitals, and balancing this with emergency demand at times is challenging. However, all efforts are made by hospitals to limit cancellations particularly for clinically urgent procedures.

Cancellation of elective procedures can occur for a variety of exceptional reasons including cancellations because a bed or the clinical team are not available, cancellations by the patient or because the patient may not be fit for surgery at the time.

Based on data provided by the NTPF, collated from reports by hospitals, approximately 3,400 elective procedures, on average, are cancelled per month. However, this must be seen in context. In 2016, typically in a month, there were approximately 53,000 admissions to acute hospitals on a daycase and an inpatient basis.

It is essential that hospitals continue to improve how they manage, and balance, the demand for emergency care with the planning of elective procedures, to minimise the impact on patients. In addition, the HSE continues to improve its processes to minimise the number sessions lost when patients cancel or do not attend for their procedures.

The Department of Health has commenced a Health Service Capacity review in line with the Programme for Government commitment, the findings of which are due to be published

before the end of the year.

In response to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

Hospitals Data

354. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the number of procedures the HSE procured from private and independent hospitals to date in 2017; the amount spent by the HSE on these procedures in private and independent hospitals to date in 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51193/17]

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.

HSE Staff Data

355. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the number of staff at national director level, assistant national director level, general manager level and grade VIII level in the HSE on 1 November 2017 or latest date available. [51194/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly on this matter.

Hospitals Data

356. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the number of public or voluntary hospitals that carry out MRI scans, in tabular form; the number of persons waiting as of 1 November 2017 or the nearest available date for such a procedure at each of the hospitals in the following waiting periods, less than three months, three months to six months, six months to nine months, nine months to 12 months and more than 12 months. [51195/17]

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.

Hospitals Data

357. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the number of public or voluntary hospitals that carry out CT scans, in tabular form; the number of persons waiting as of 1 November 2017 or the nearest available date for such a procedure at each of the hospitals in the following waiting periods, less than three months, three months to six months, six months to nine months, nine months to 12 months and more than 12 months. [51196/17]

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.

Hospitals Data

358. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the number of public or voluntary hospitals that carry out bone scans, in tabular form; the number of persons waiting as of 1 November 2017 or the nearest available date for such a procedure at each of the hospitals in the following waiting periods, less than three months, three months to six months, six months to nine months, nine months to 12 months and more than 12 months. [51197/17]

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.

Hospitals Data

359. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the number of public or voluntary hospitals that carry out angiograms, in tabular form; the number of persons waiting as of 1 November 2017 or the nearest available date for such a procedure at each of the hospitals in the following waiting periods, less than three months, three months to six months, six months to nine months, nine months to 12 months and more than 12 months. [51198/17]

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.

Hospitals Data

360. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the number of public or voluntary hospitals that carry out electroencephalograms, in tabular form; the number of persons waiting as of 1 November 2017 or the nearest available date for such a procedure at each of the hospitals in the following waiting periods, less than three months, three months to six months, six months to nine months, nine months to 12 months and more than 12 months. [51199/17]

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.

Hospitals Data

361. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the number of public or voluntary hospitals that carry out endoscopic retrograde cholangiopancreatography, in tabular form; the number of persons waiting as of 1 November 2017 or the nearest available date for such a procedure at each of the hospitals in the following waiting periods, less than three months, three months to six months, six months to nine months, nine months to 12 months and more than 12 months. [51200/17]

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.

Medical Card Data

362. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the number of medical cards for persons over 70 years of age in circulation as of 31 October 2017 for each local health area, in tabular form. [51201/17]

363. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the number of discretionary medical cards in circulation as of 31 October 2017 for each local health area, in tabular form. [51202/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 362 and 363 together.

As these are service matters they have been referred to the HSE for direct reply to the Deputy.

Services for People with Disabilities

364. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide more dedicated funding and assistance for those living with dyspraxia, or developmental co-ordination disorder; if he will ensure that sufficient funding is set aside in the HSE services plan for this purpose; if he will review his Department's decision to refuse funding for an education officer and information officer for a charity (details supplied); if he will provide a rationale for this refusal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51245/17]

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 a service matter, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

Brexit Staff

365. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the estimated cost of hiring additional Brexit staff in his Department; the cost by grade; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50914/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Following the UK referendum in June 2016, my Department established a dedicated Brexit and International Trade Division. The Division co-ordinates the ongoing analysis, consultation and engagement activities being undertaken by a large number of administrative, technical and veterinary staff across the Department. An internal Brexit Response Committee comprised of expertise drawn from the wide range of Divisions affected by Brexit (including, for example, Meat and Milk Policy, Animal Health and Welfare, Food Industry Development, Economics and Planning, and Seafood Policy and Development) has also been established. The Brexit Unit feeds into the whole-of-Government co-ordination being undertaken by the Department of the Taoiseach.

The Unit comes under the responsibility of an Assistant Secretary and is led by an experienced Principal Officer with a team of both experienced and newly recruited staff. The cost of the unit has been accommodated within the existing sanctioned pay ceiling for the department. The current staffing complement is 3 Assistant Principal Officers, 3 Higher Executive Officers/Administrative Officers and 1 Clerical Officer. The estimated staffing and associated annual

costs of the Brexit Unit are €856,685.50.

The function of this unit is to co-ordinate the Department's preparations for Brexit. These extend across virtually every division in the department, from those dealing with veterinary and public and animal health, to plant health, border controls and the various sectoral policy divisions. Staffing requirements for Brexit associated functions across the Department are constantly under review and additional resources will be assigned to relevant functions as the need arises.

Brexit Staff

366. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the estimated cost of hiring additional Brexit staff for Bord Bia; the cost by grade; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50915/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): My Department will be providing support to the State Agencies under its aegis in the context of the challenges arising due to Brexit.

All information relating to the costs of hiring additional staff are operational matters for the State Body concerned and I have asked my Department to forward the Deputy's question to Bord Bia for direct reply.

Food Wise 2025 Strategy

367. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the estimated cost of a review of Food Wise 2025; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50918/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): In July this year, I launched the second annual progress report on Food Wise 2025: Steps to Success 2017. This showed that, of the 368 detailed actions which were due to commence by 2017 or are on-going actions, 46% have been achieved or substantial action has been undertaken, and a further 49% have commenced and are progressing well.

As regards reviewing the strategy, it is important to understand that Food Wise 2025 is, in fact, a living and evolving strategy, driven by a High Level Implementation Committee, which I chair. My Department will host a Food Wise Conference in Croke Park next week (4 December) which will acknowledge the achievements of the Irish agri-food sector in terms of innovative, sustainable growth over recent years, and consider how the Food Wise process can lead a dynamic, collaborative response to the opportunities and challenges facing the sector, including of course Brexit.

Agri-food Sector

368. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the costing of the development of further loan schemes for the agrifood sector and funding for Bord Bia promotion and development work in the context of Brexit in budget 2018. [50924/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): I believe that

supporting lower-cost, flexible finance is a key Government response to Brexit. The very successful “Agriculture Cashflow Loan Scheme” has provided a template for such schemes, including the new “Brexit Loan Scheme”, which makes 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.

This fund will be supported by €23 million in exchequer funding, with €9 million from my Department and the remainder from the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation, by way of guarantee. At least 40% of this fund 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.

I also announced in the Budget that I have secured funding of €25 million for my Department to facilitate the development of new Brexit response loan schemes during 2018 for farmers, fishermen and food businesses. My Department has had preliminary engagement with the SBCI in this regard and further details will be available in 2018.

Since the Brexit decision, my Department has placed great emphasis on enhancing its own capacity and that of Bord Bia’s in the area of market diversification and new market access. Following on from the extra €10 million that I allocated to Bord Bia since the Brexit vote, I will be providing an additional €4.5 million in Budget 2018 to assist the agency in its promotional and developmental work overseas.

Furthermore, my Department is working with the Department of An Taoiseach and other Government Departments on the expansion of the State’s Global footprint, to ensure that the future development of the Irish agri-food sector is incorporated into this strategy.

Agriculture Scheme Administration

369. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if his Department followed the entire EU Council regulations dealing in particular with persons who were under an agri-environment scheme contract such as REPS 1 (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50738/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): I can confirm that my Department automatically applied the provisions of art 40.5 of Council Regulation 1782/03 to all farmers whose sheep numbers were reduced during the reference period 2000-2002 by virtue of their participation in an Agri Environment Scheme.

If the Deputy has a particular case in mind he may contact my Department and my officials will carry out a full review.

Agriculture Scheme Appeals

370. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of appeals to the independent Agriculture Appeals Office; the number that were allowed, partially allowed and unsuccessful, respectively, by county, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50740/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The information requested is currently being collated by the independent Agriculture Appeals Office and is

not available within the timeframe given. A reply will issue directly to the Deputy.

Agri-Environment Options Scheme Applications

371. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if the case of a person (details supplied) regarding the agri-environment options scheme, AEOS, will be re-examined; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50824/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The person named joined the AEOS3 scheme with a start date of 1 May 2013. He received payments in respect of the 2013, 2014 and 2015 scheme years. An AEOS inspection was carried out on 27 July 2016 and he was informed by letter dated 9 November 2016 that, as a result of the findings of that inspection, he was rejected from the scheme and was given the option of requesting a review by the Regional Inspector.

A review request was received and dealt with by the Regional Inspector, who upheld the decision of the inspector in a letter to the person named, dated 28 August 2017, giving the person named a right of appeal to the independent Agricultural Appeals Office.

It is understood that an appeal was submitted to the Agriculture Appeals Office. A decision will issue from that office to the person named in due course.

Dairy Sector

372. **Deputy Michael Lowry** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will request dairy co-operators to organise a scheme for the purchase of generators by dairy farmers; his plans to provide low interest loans for such a scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50850/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Following a challenging period, the dairy sector has experienced positive trends this year in terms of raw milk and specific commodity prices, particularly for butter. I am confident that, as market demand for safe, sustainable, high quality dairy products in expanding global markets increases, the Irish dairy sector, from the farm gate to the further reaches of the supply chain, will continue to grow and prosper.

I am very aware of the impact of Storm Ophelia, particularly of course the tragic loss of life. I would like to again pay tribute to the joined-up public service response, led by the National Emergency Coordination Group, including officials from my Department.

The main impact of the storm on the dairy sector was in terms of power outages. While this caused inconvenience and expense for some individual farmers, similar issues arose for small businesses across the country. ESB teams worked tirelessly to reconnect electricity supplies. Many farmers also benefitted from back up generators shared between neighbours and at co-op level.

This experience underlines the importance for dairy farmers to have a plan in place to access a back-up power supply in such circumstances.

Rural Environment Protection Scheme Appeals

373. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will address a matter regarding the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50858/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): My Department fully examined the circumstances of the Force Majeure application of the person named and decided that the application did not satisfy the criteria laid down in Article 40 of Council Regulation EC No 1782/2003 determining Force Majeure. This decision also took into account the provisions of Article 40.5 of that Regulation.

In considering this decision particular regard was given to the circumstance surrounding the decision of the person named to sell suckler enterprise and suckler quota. It was however deemed that this was a management decision and therefore did not fall within the provisions of Force Majeure. The decision of the person named to join the REPS scheme was voluntary and all decisions thereafter, taken in order to comply with the conditions of the scheme, follow from this initial voluntary decision.

The person named appealed this decision to the Independent Single Payment Appeals Committee and submitted a complaint to the Office of the Ombudsman, who having re-examined all aspects of the case recommended that the original decision taken by my Department should be upheld.

Aquaculture Licence Administration

374. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status and timeframe of the implementation of the recommendations outlined in the independent review of the aquaculture licence process; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50862/17]

375. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the way in which his Department is implementing recommendations 8.3(1), 8.3(2), 8.3(3) and 8.3(4) of the review of the aquaculture licence process on public notice; if they are not being progressed, the reason therefor; when they will be progressed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50863/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): I propose to take Questions Nos. 374 and 375 together.

I received the Report of the Independent Aquaculture Licensing Review Group on 31st May 2017. The Group's Report is published and available to view on my Department's website at www.agriculture.gov.ie/seafood/aquacultureforeshoremanagement/aquaculturelicensing/. The overarching conclusion of the Report is for a root-and-branch reform of the aquaculture licence application processes to take place with a focus on both short-term immediate actions and longer term initiatives. There are a total of 30 recommendations in the Report.

Since receiving the Report my Department has engaged in detailed consideration of all 30 recommendations with a view to preparing a comprehensive implementation plan. This implementation plan will take account of legislative, environmental, technical and public interest issues that have a bearing on the sustainable development of the industry.

My Department's work on the implementation plan is at a very advanced stage. However, as consideration of all relevant issues remains ongoing it would not be appropriate for me to comment further at this time.

Environmental Impact Statements

376. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of environmental impact assessments, EIAs, he has commissioned for aquaculture licences in 2014, 2015 and 2016; the water bodies to which these EIAs applied; if this information publicly available; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50864/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Environmental Impact Assessments in respect of the years referred to by the Deputy were conducted by my Department under the provisions of Statutory Instrument 236 of 1998 as amended.

During this period one Environmental Impact Assessment was carried out in respect of an aquaculture licence application for the cultivation of finfish in the marine environment.

The water body in question was Bantry Bay.

This Environmental Impact Assessment, together with the Environmental Impact Statement submitted by the applicant, are available to view on my Department's website.

Sheep Welfare Scheme Appeals

377. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of an appeal by persons (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51165/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The Sheep Welfare Scheme was introduced in December 2016 to support the delivery of flock health benefits in the sheep sector. Under the terms and conditions of the scheme, applicants to the scheme are required to submit the annual Sheep Census return in accordance within the set deadlines.

In the case of this application, the Sheep Census Return for 2016 was not received within the required deadlines and thus the application for participation in the scheme was not accepted.

The applicants submitted an initial appeal on this decision to the Department. However, this appeal was unsuccessful. The applicants were advised at this time that they had the option to seek a review of this decision to a higher officer of the department.

This subsequent appeal was reviewed by a more senior officer of the Department but this appeal was also unsuccessful. The applicants were advised of this decision in a letter dated 24 November 2017. This letter has also advised the applicants that they have the right of further appeal to the Agriculture Appeals Office.

Areas of Natural Constraint Scheme Payments

378. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the estimated amount the payment increase per hectare would be for proposals (details supplied), in tabular form. [51169/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The information sought by the Deputy is currently being compiled and will be forwarded as soon as it is available.

Agriculture Scheme Payments

379. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the estimated amount the payment increase per hectare would be under proposals (details supplied), in tabular form. [51170/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The information sought by the Deputy is currently being compiled and will be forwarded as soon as it is available.

Agriculture Scheme Payments

380. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the estimated amount the payment increase per hectare would be under proposals (details supplied), in tabular form. [51171/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The information sought by the Deputy is currently being compiled and will be forwarded as soon as it is available.

Areas of Natural Constraint Scheme Data

381. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of persons approved under the areas of natural constraint, ANC, scheme by each respective area designation, namely, mountain type land, more severely handicapped lowland, less severely handicapped lowland and areas of specific constraints and the islands, in tabular form; the payment rate for each respective area designation; the amount of funds under the scheme that have been drawn down to date under each area designation in each of the years 2014 to 2016 and to date in 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51172/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The information sought by the Deputy is currently being compiled and will be forwarded as soon as it is available.

Areas of Natural Constraint Scheme Data

382. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of persons participating in the areas of natural constraint, ANC, scheme, by county, on an annual basis over the 2014 to 2017 period, in tabular form; the annual budget allocation for the scheme in this period; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51173/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Statistics in relation to participants in the Areas of Natural Constraint Scheme at a county level for scheme years 2015, 2016 and 2017 (to date) are set out in the following table.

The annual allocation for the Areas of Natural Constraints scheme, including the Areas of Specific Constraint Island Farming scheme, from 2015 to 2017 was €202 million.

Questions - Written Answers

		2015		2016		2017 (to date)
County	Num Applied	Num Eligible	Num Applied	Num Eligible	Num Applied	Num Eligible
Carlow	988	764	966	738	1,029	743
Cavan	4,962	4,899	4,838	4,772	4,812	4,755
Clare	6,218	6,152	6,040	5,977	6,049	6,001
Cork	10,211	7,165	10,219	6,990	10,653	7,020
Donegal	8,944	8,711	8,787	8,575	8,805	8,580
Dublin	198	152	203	152	291	157
Galway	12,431	12,128	12,070	11,884	11,996	11,850
Kerry	7,931	7,788	7,734	7,596	7,745	7,605
Kildare	994	531	1,150	525	1,189	534
Kilkenny	2,473	1,789	2,649	1,733	2,715	1,731
Laois	2,398	1,738	2,355	1,689	2,412	1,687
Leitrim	3,575	3,537	3,437	3,406	3,434	3,407
Limerick	4,112	2,978	4,123	2,884	4,258	2,902
Longford	2,438	2,406	2,358	2,334	2,355	2,330
Louth	1,118	806	1,087	777	1,126	783
Mayo	11,811	11,664	11,498	11,385	11,437	11,342
Meath	2,400	1,362	2,380	1,322	2,483	1,342
Monaghan	4,244	4,144	4,116	4,012	4,095	4,006
Offaly	2,891	2,448	2,813	2,384	2,856	2,396
Roscommon	5,860	5,805	5,648	5,596	5,649	5,609
Sligo	4,131	4,076	4,003	3,937	3,990	3,943
Tipperary	6,016	4,570	5,870	4,428	6,057	4,433
Waterford	2,019	1,455	2,034	1,411	2,050	1,413
Westmeath	2,976	2,704	2,879	2,622	2,909	2,638
Wexford	2,740	1,514	2,642	1,482	2,968	1,498
Wicklow	2,020	1,847	1,967	1,788	2,005	1,795
Total	116,099	103,133	113,866	100,399	115,368	100,500

Rural Development Programme Data

383. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the annual expenditure incurred in 2014, 2015, 2016 and to date in 2017 for each measure under the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 (details supplied), in tabular form; the original budget allocations made for each of the years in the 2014 to 2017 period; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51174/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): It is not possible to collate all of the material requested in the timeframe. A reply will issue directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Departmental Agencies Funding

384. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the Exchequer funding allocated in 2016 and 2017 to each State agency under his aegis, including Bord Bia, Bord Iascaigh Mhara, the National Milk Agency, Teagasc and the Marine Institute, in tabular form; and the 2018 budget allocation. [51232/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The information requested by the Deputy is set out in the table.

State Body	Allocation 2016 - €000	Allocation as in REV 2017 - €000
Teagasc	116,280	128,130
Bord Bia	32,492	34,492
Marine Institute	29,309	31,563
Bord Iascaigh Mhara	31,180	44,088
Sea Fisheries Protection Agency	12,460	12,800
Horse & Greyhound Racing Fund	74,000	80,000
Of which: Horse Racing Ireland	59,200	64,000
Bord na gCon	14,800	16,000

In addition to the agencies mentioned specifically by the Deputy, the table includes the agencies funded through the exchequer allocation to the Horse & Greyhound Racing Fund i.e. Horse Racing Ireland and Bord na gCon.

As part of the 2017 Supplementary Estimate currently before the Dail, an amount of €6.6m is proposed to be added to the 2017 Revised Estimates Volume (REV) allocation for Bord Bia. The National Milk Agency is not in receipt of any funding from my Department.

The individual allocations for 2018 will be set out in the Revised Estimates Volume (REV) to be published later this year.

Departmental Staff Data

385. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of full-time and part-time staff working in the dedicated market access unit established within the meat and milk policy division; and the yearly cost of the unit, including staffing costs. [51233/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): One of the Department's key priorities is to further increase the market opportunity for Irish food and drink internationally. This principle of market development is already a key component of Food Wise 2025, but is particularly important now in the context of Brexit.

In relation to meat, this effort is co-ordinated by a dedicated meat market access unit, whose staffing complement has increased in line with my action plan on market access. This unit currently comprises a team of seven people led by an Assistant Principal Officer. The annual cost for staffing this unit, including salary, PRSI, pension and accommodation, is estimated at approximately €500,000. The work of the unit supports a meat industry with exports of over €3 billion.

The meat market access unit works on expanding market access for beef, sheepmeat, pigmeat, poultry and cooked meats across a range of markets, and is also working to simplify certification procedures in a number of markets to which Ireland already has access.

This work involves staff across the department, including veterinary services, laboratory staff, inspectorate staff, Brexit/International Trade Division and a wide range of other divisions, in completing market access questionnaires, facilitating incoming inspection visits, participating in diplomatic meetings, agreeing export health certificates and so on. All of this inter-connected work facilitates the accessing of new markets and the maintenance of existing markets.

My Department has made significant progress in recent years in increasing market access opportunities for Irish meat exports.

Sheep Welfare Scheme Data

386. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the estimated additional annual increase in Exchequer funding needed for the sheep welfare scheme to attain compensation at amounts per ewe per number of applications received (details supplied) based on current participation rates and scheme criteria, in tabular form. [51235/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The total number of ewes applied for on eligible applications received under the Sheep Welfare Scheme is 1,941,870.

It is not possible to simply increase the rate per ewe because all the actions under the scheme are based on costings which have been agreed with the EU Commission. Thus any increase in the rate would have to be based on changes or additions to the current actions under the scheme. Any change here may well lead to a change in the number of applications and/or the number of ewes in the scheme.

In addition, any change to a scheme funded under the Rural Development Programme requires a formal amendment to the Programme with the approval of the EU Commission.

Bearing all of the above in mind, the information sought by the Deputy is set out in the table.

Rate per Ewe	Total Payable
€10.00	19,418,700.00
€10.50	20,389,635.00
€11.00	21,360,570.00
€11.50	22,331,505.00
€12.00	23,302,440.00
€12.50	24,273,375.00
€13.00	25,244,310.00
€13.50	26,215,245.00
€14.00	27,186,180.00
€14.50	28,157,115.00
€15.00	29,128,050.00
€15.50	30,098,985.00
€16.00	31,069,920.00
€16.50	32,040,855.00

Rate per Ewe	Total Payable
€17.00	33,011,790.00
€17.50	33,982,725.00
€18.00	34,953,660.00
€18.50	35,924,595.00
€19.00	36,895,530.00
€19.50	37,866,465.00
€20.00	38,837,400.00

Beef Data and Genomics Programme

387. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the approximate additional annual increase in Exchequer funding needed for the beef data and genomics programme if compensation were to be fixed at rates (details supplied), in tabular form. [51236/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The Beef Data and Genomics Programme is currently the main support for the suckler sector and provides farmers with some €300 million of funding over the lifetime of the current RDP.

Last April the BDGP was reopened to beef suckler farmers who were not already part of the scheme. We have 24,662 herds between BDGP I and II. BDGP II provides for payments to farmers for completion of actions which deliver accelerated genetic improvement in the national herd and improvement of its environmental sustainability.

Any change to the scheme would be very difficult in the context of an innovative scheme which has undergone an approval process by the European Commission. Payments to farmers under the BDGP are made on the basis of costs incurred or income forgone, any change to payment rates would require farmers to undertake additional actions to justify any increased payment.

The BDGP as currently configured represents a balance between direct income support for the sector and rural development measures designed to improve its competitiveness and sustainability. I believe that it is entirely appropriate to maintain this balance of developmental and income supports into the future.

Bearing the above information in mind, the following table sets out the additional notional per animal costs as requested.

-	Additional cost - €
1st 10 @150	12,315,655
1st 15 @150	18,050,545
1st 20 @150	22,306,405
1st 25 @150	25,384,165
1st 30@150	27,611,425
1st 10 @175	17,913,680
1st 15 @175	25,696,745
1st 20 @175	31,472,555
1st 25 @175	35,649,515
1st 30@175	38,672,225

-	Additional cost - €
1st 10 @200	23,511,705
1st 15 @200	33,342,945
1st 20 @200	40,638,705
1st 25 @200	45,914,865
1st 30@200	49,733,025

Areas of Natural Constraint Scheme Funding

388. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the funding for the areas of natural constraint, ANC, scheme in 2016 and 2017; and the budget allocation for 2018. [51237/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The allocation for the Areas of Natural Constraints (ANC) scheme, including the Areas of Specific Constraint Island Farming Scheme, for 2016 and 2017 was €202 million.

In line with commitments under the Programme for a Partnership Government an additional €25 million has been allocated to the 2018 scheme funding.

Fish Exports

389. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the volume and value of fish exports in 2015 and 2016 and to date in 2017, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51239/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The volume and value of fish exports in 2015 and 2016, as compiled by the CSO, are set out in the following tables. The figures for 2017 up to September and those for January - September 2016, for comparison purposes, are also presented.

January-December 2015		January-December 2016	
€000	Tonnes	€000	Tonnes
567,600	251,995	554,730	201,408
January-September 2016		January-September 2017	
€000	Tonnes	€000	Tonnes
397,343	148,344	463,805	183,710

Fisheries Protection

390. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he has received correspondence from an organisation (details supplied) in relation to the designation of rivers as catch-and-release salmon fisheries for 2018; if a response has yet been issued; the reason for the reclassification of these fisheries; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50729/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Seán Kyne): Management of salmon stocks is carried out by Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) and is supported by scientific advice from the International Council for the Ex-

ploration of the Seas (ICES) and Ireland's independent Standing Scientific Committee (SSC).

I gave statutory notice on 15 November 2017 of the draft Wild Salmon and Sea Trout Tagging Scheme Regulations, 2017 to provide for the management of the wild salmon and sea trout fishery by IFI from 1 January 2018.

A copy of the draft regulations, which are made every year, is available on my Department's website, www.dccae.gov.ie/natural, and is open for public inspection at the offices of the Inland Fisheries Division of the Department in Cavan and also at the offices of Inland Fisheries Ireland around the country. Observations on the draft regulations may be made, via written submission, at any time during the period of 30 days concluding on 14 December, 2017.

The draft regulations provide for an individual management regime for each of Ireland's 147 salmon rivers, river sections and estuaries based on the conservation imperative for their individual genetic stock. The regulations are based on management advice received from IFI. This advice from IFI is supported by individual stock assessments carried out by the SSC comprising scientists from a range of organisations.

Correspondence has been received from an organisation referred to by the Deputy and in line with established policy this is being considered as a submission within the statutory consultation process. A detailed response to all submissions received in the process will issue after the period of consultation has closed. It is not appropriate to comment on individual submissions while the public consultation process is under way.

Waste Management Regulations

391. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his plans to implement legislative measures compelling private waste collectors to provide more detailed guidance to their domestic customers regarding the types of plastics or other material that can or cannot be put in the green bin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50746/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): The seventh schedule to the Waste Management (Collection Permit) Regulations, S.I. No. 820 of 2007, as amended, sets out a minimum list of recyclable material that household waste collectors must accept. A condition attached to household waste collection permits also provides that the permit holder shall implement and maintain an on-going programme of communication for their household kerbside waste customers in accordance with their customer charter or as may be required by the National Waste Collection Permit Office. The customer charter, which household waste collectors are required to have in place, states that: *Information packs shall be available to all customers clearly indicating waste types appropriate to each bin and how to present material for recycling.*

Household waste collectors are free, however, under that legislation to accept additional recyclable items not contained in the seventh schedule to S.I. No. 820 of 2007, as amended.

Market research undertaken by my Department this year identified that this non-uniformity around what items go in which bin was causing some confusion. This situation cannot continue, where just one contaminated item can ruin all our good recycling efforts.

I therefore announced yesterday that the Regional Waste Management Offices, Repak and the waste industry have worked together to address this issue and that for the first time ever, we have a single agreed list of items which can be placed in the recycle bin, regardless of where

you live.

Removing confusion will undoubtedly play a huge role in improving the quality of the material which goes in the recycle bin, helping to ensure that this material is actually recycled as opposed to being contaminated and sent for recovery or to landfill.

This definitive list and further information is available to download at <http://recyclinglistireland.ie/> and will be used by all stakeholders as a platform for education and communication to further improve recycling in our respective communities.

Energy Schemes Data

392. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the energy upgrade work funded by his Department over the past two years, by county (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50751/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): Funded by my Department, the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) delivers a number of programmes that support energy efficiency across the residential, public and commercial sectors.

The Better Energy Homes (BEH) scheme provides grant aid to private homeowners who wish to improve the energy performance of their home. Fixed grants are provided towards the cost of a range of measures including attic insulation, wall insulation, heating systems upgrades, solar thermal panels and accompanying Building Energy Rating (BER). In 2016 over €17m was spent providing upgrades to 15,265 homes across Ireland. To date in 2017 almost €15m has been spent for upgrades to 13,577 homes.

The Better Energy Warmer Homes (BEWH) scheme delivers a range of energy efficiency measures free of charge to low income households vulnerable to energy poverty. The measures available typically include draught proofing, attic insulation, lagging jackets for hot water tanks, low energy light bulbs, cavity wall insulation and roof and wall ventilation. In 2016 spend of €17.1m provided upgrades to 6,839 homes. To date in 2017 spend of €15.2m has provided upgrades to 5,620 homes.

County	Better Energy Homes		Better Energy Warmer Homes	
	Homes Grant Aided	Spend	Homes Grant Aided	Spend
	2016	2017 YTD	2016	2017 YTD
Carlow	141	141	€143,950	130650
Cavan	188	128	€175,300	134750
Clare	296	277	€361,550	334050
Cork	2,158	1,656	€2,261,175	1787214.1
Donegal	157	163	€271,950	243325
Dublin	4,738	4,383	€5,956,419	5407969
Galway	782	758	€777,052	732300
Kerry	421	355	€608,800	522300
Kildare	643	685	€711,130	675950
Kilkenny	221	106	€206,550	132800
Laois	264	220	€194,300	173550
Leitrim	40	39	€44,200	46600
Limerick	1,010	893	€916,553	766150
Longford	35	106	€35,350	88650
Louth	494	492	€457,218	431400
Mayo	427	380	€478,725	420625

				Better Energy Homes				Better Energy Warmer Homes
Meath	635	555	€671,600	533650	697	154	€1,547,615.40	€409,860.80
Monaghan	80	72	€101,610	87400	45	29	€129,734.56	€88,527.33
Offaly	154	172	€134,300	167294.5	337	84	€936,966.36	€227,836.94
Roscommon	167	111	€148,450	120250	82	60	€257,299.39	€224,390.29
Sligo	123	96	€157,100	157150	139	186	€400,865.68	€678,332.38
Tipperary	502	356	€528,100	393460	203	272	€513,978.76	€772,701.50
Waterford	420	311	€466,511	342000	106	191	€327,691.18	€727,157.22
Westmeath	252	197	€245,650	226150	182	106	€510,732.62	€371,669.12
Wexford	508	457	€416,950	380660	297	346	€849,172.75	€1,067,952.29
Wicklow	409	468	€556,750	546450	438	110	€977,271.23	€347,581.21
Total	15,265	13,577	€17,027,242	€14,982,747.6	6839	5620	€17,126,895.54	€15,237,393.89

The Warmth and Wellbeing Pilot Scheme commenced in 2016. It is funded by my Department and is a joint policy initiative with the Department of Health. It is operated by SEAI and the HSE. The aim of the pilot is to provide deep energy efficiency interventions to people living with chronic respiratory conditions who are in or at risk of energy poverty. By making their homes warmer, more comfortable and cheaper to run, it is hoped that this will improve their health and wellbeing. The pilot scheme is currently operating in Dublin 8, 10, 12, 22 or 24. In 2016 spend of €0.5m helped upgrade 72 homes. To date in 2017 spend of €2.6m has upgraded 196 homes. I expect that upgrades to 500 homes will have been completed by end year.

The Better Energy Community scheme cut across a variety of sectors, so it is not possible to give a strict breakdown of the scheme according to individual sectors. Projects can also involve participants from more than one county. Details of Better Energy Communities projects in 2016 and to date in 2017, their spend and their county location are set out in the following table.

The Deep Retrofit Pilot scheme commenced operation in 2017. The scheme aims to help us understand how best we can persuade people to invest in the deep retrofit of their homes and what solutions we need to put in place to make it easy for them to do so. To be eligible for support, a home must be upgraded to at least an A3 standard on the Building Energy Rating scale and the heating system must be upgraded to a renewable energy alternative.

County	No. of homes
Co. Cork	2
Co. Dublin	3
Co. Kildare	1
Co. Mayo	12
Co. Meath	1
Co. Wexford	12
Co. Waterford	11
	42

For the commercial and public sector, not all investment is categorised on a county basis. The following tables detail the funding allocated through SEAI this year in support of commercial and public sector grant supports with the county breakdown details available for the preparation of this reply.

In 2017, as part of the implementation of the Public Sector Energy Efficiency Strategy, SEAI on behalf of the Department, and in collaboration on a shared cost basis with the Department of Education (DES), undertook medium to deep retrofits in ten schools across Ireland. Works included fabric upgrades (typically walls and roofs but also some windows and doors), heating

system upgrades, lighting system upgrades and Building Management Systems. The total cost of the pilot is estimated to be €4.33m (on shared basis between both Departments – 50% each). The location of each school and cost of upgrades are set out in the following table. The objective of this scheme is to develop replicable specifications for deep retrofits of schools.

Nr	School	Location	Total	DCCA/E/SEAI Contribution 50%
1	Colaiste na Trocaire	Rathkeale, Limerick	€582,292.17	€291,146.08
2	Boherbue Comp	Boherbue, Cork	€459,336.28	€229,668.14
3	St Gerald's College	Castlebar, Mayo	€581,528.24	€290,764.12
4	Our Lady's	Sligo, Sligo	€538,028.71	€269,014.35
5	Presentation College	Carlow, Carlow	€410,205.44	€205,102.72
6	ABACUS School	Drogheda, Louth	€518,474.13	€259,237.07
7	Scoil Ide	Clondalkin, Dublin	€301,526.85	€150,763.42
8	St Columbanus	Glenageary, Dublin	€198,853.55	€99,426.78
9	St Johns	Ballybrack, Dublin	€201,106.18	€100,553.09
10	Presentation College	Warrenmount, Dublin	€277,337.53	€138,668.76

Note: 50% balancing contribution from Department of Education and Skills

Two pilot schemes were launched in 2017 to support energy efficiency upgrades in the commercial sector.

The Dairy Sector Project - a collaboration between SEAI and Teagasc - supports installation of variable speed drive technology in milking parlours, as well as Vacuum Pumps, and smart meters. The subvention level is 50%. Over 50 applications were processed with a total grant amount of €231,638. These technologies can reduce energy consumption considerably on a farm.

The SME Smart Lighting Scheme, aimed at small and medium enterprises - such as jewelers, fitness centres, nursing homes, small hotels and large B&Bs, retailers and pharmacies - encourages such businesses to change their lights to more energy efficient lights. There are currently 39 SMEs benefitting from the scheme with current projected grant funding of €603,000 resulting in total investment of just over €1.5m (including the grant which is typically 40%).

		Smart Lighting Pilot		2017 Dairy Farm Pilot Grants by County
County	Number by County	Grant by County - €	Number by County	Grant by County - €
Carlow	0	0	1	€4,500.00
Cavan	2	€12,701	0	€ -
Clare	0	0	0	€ -
Cork	3	€10,357.60	13	€57,280.00
Donegal	2	€27,028.20	0	€ -
Dublin	4	€122,110.86	0	€ -
Galway	3	€50,474.60	0	€ -
Kerry	2	€9,518.00	7	€32,090.00
Kildare	1	€7,925.60	3	€15,500.00
Kilkenny	1	€31,517.20	3	€9,500.00
Laois	0	0	2	€12,000.00

		Smart Lighting Pilot		2017 Dairy Farm Pilot Grants by County
Leitrim	2	€22,664.80	0	€ -
Limerick	1	€3,217.60	3	€17,500.00
Longford	0	0	0	€ -
Louth	0	0	1	€5,250.00
Mayo	5	€73,835.20	0	€ -
Meath	3	€145,475.27	7	€27,683.40
Monaghan	0	0	2	€8,000.00
Offaly	0	0	1	€4,000.00
Roscommon	2	€9,480.00	0	€ -
Sligo	1	€8,031.90	0	€ -
Tipperary	1	€1,276.40	4	€18,992.50
Waterford	1	€4,702.40	3	€6,843.00
Westmeath	4	€37,957.60	0	€ -
Wexford	1	€24,800.00	2	€8,500.00
Wicklow	0	0	1	€4,000.00
Total	39	€603,073.43	53	€231,638.90

Fisheries Protection

393. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment when he will roll out a hardship fund or compensation scheme for eel fishers whose livelihoods were decimated following the introduction of the ban on eel fishing; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50781/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Seán Kyne): I refer to the reply to Questions Nos. 60 and 74 of 21 November 2017. The position is unchanged.

National Broadband Plan Expenditure

394. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the budget allocation for the national broadband plan in each of the years 2016, 2017 and 2018. [50950/17]

402. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the amount his Department has spent on the national broadband plan in each year since 2011. [50995/17]

403. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the amount his Department has allocated to the national broadband plan for 2018. [50996/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): I propose to take Questions Nos. 394, 402 and 403 together.

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. The NBP is being achieved through a combination of commercial investment and a State led Intervention in those areas where commercial investors acting alone will not provide this essential service. The State Intervention is the subject of an ongoing procurement process.

On 29 September 2015 the Government agreed on and published its 6 year Capital Plan, *Building on Recovery*, which included an allocation of €275m for the State led Intervention under the NBP. This provides the initial stimulus required to deliver the Government's intervention. Funding of €75m has also been committed through the European Regional Development Fund.

Further funding will be required over the lifetime of the proposed 25 year contract to build, maintain and operate the broadband network in the State Intervention Area. In this regard, the Programme for a Partnership Government (PfG) notes that Government will provide additional Exchequer capital, if needed, to deliver on the commitment to bring next generation broadband to every house and business in the country.

The budget allocation for the Department's work to deliver the State led Intervention for the time period requested is set out in the following table.

Year	Budget
2016	€10m
2017	€15m
2018	€15m (Projected)

The NBP was launched in December 2012, and expenditure in respect of the State led Intervention therefore dates from 2013. The expenditure to date is set out in the following table.

Year	Expenditure
2013	€394,507
2014	€686,864
2015	€3,001,761
2016	€2,360,136
2017	€8,211,568 (to date)

My Department has allocated €15 million to the Department's work on the State led Intervention for the NBP for 2018.

The procurement process being managed by the Department's specialist NBP team is a complex one and it is important that it is adequately resourced to ensure efficiency, robustness and transparency. However, delivering connectivity to the 542,000 premises that fall within the State led intervention under the NBP remains a Government priority.

Electric Vehicles

395. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the estimated cost of extending SEAI purchase grants for the purchase of electric vehicles only for each year up to 2023. [50985/17]

396. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his Department's projections for the number of electric and hybrid vehicles that will be registered in Ireland by 2023, by year and vehicle type. [50986/17]

399. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the number of electric vehicles that are registered here; and the number of electric vehicles that were registered to date in 2017. [50990/17]

400. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the number of hybrid vehicles that are registered here; and the number of hybrid vehicles that were registered to date in 2017. [50991/17]

405. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the estimated cost of building an additional standard electric vehicle charging point; and the estimated cost of building an additional fast-charging point. [51000/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): I propose to take Questions Nos. 395, 396, 399, 400 and 405 together.

The electric vehicle purchase grant, introduced in April 2011, provides support of up to €5,000 towards the purchase of a new battery electric vehicle or a new plug-in hybrid electric vehicle. From the introduction of the Scheme to the end of October 2017, grant support has been provided for the purchase of a total of 2,499 vehicles to the value of €11.8 million. During the first ten months of this year, €3.7 million has been provided to support the purchase of 771 new electric vehicles.

Figures from the Central Statistics office indicate that, for the first ten months of 2017, there were 843 new electric vehicles (both battery electric and plug-in hybrid electric) licensed for the first time. The number of new hybrid vehicles licensed for the first time for the first ten months of 2017 is 4,232.

My Department does not collate figures for the numbers of vehicles registered in Ireland. However, based on data from the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport, at the end of the third quarter this year, there were 3,258 electric vehicles (both battery electric and plug-in hybrid electric) under taxation in Ireland. In addition, over 11,000 hybrid vehicles have been licensed in Ireland.

The purchase grant scheme is demand led. Therefore, it can be difficult to predict exactly how many vehicles will be supported in future years. In May this year, the Government approved and published the National Policy Framework on Alternative Fuels Infrastructure for Transport in Ireland 2017 to 2030. This policy framework sets an ambitious target that by 2030 all new cars and vans sold in Ireland will be zero emissions, or zero emissions capable.

The National Policy Framework includes an indicative forecast of the numbers of alternative fuel vehicles at particular milestones up to 2030. In the case of electric passenger cars, the projections indicate the potential for 20,000 cars by 2020 and 250,000 by 2025. More detail, which includes projections for other vehicle types such as goods vehicles, buses and motorcycles, is contained in the framework document which is available on the website of the Department of Transport Tourism and Sport.

The ESB, through its eCars programme, has rolled out an extensive public network of charging points across Ireland. With approximately 900 electric vehicle charge points, for a country of our size, we have one of the more comprehensive charge point networks in Europe. It is estimated that the average cost of installing a fast charge point is circa €50,000. The cost of installing a standard charge point is estimated to be up to €5,000. The cost per unit can vary in

price depending on the supplier and functionality of the charge point and the associated works for installing the charge point at a site.

The Low Emissions Vehicle Taskforce is co-chaired by my Department and the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport. It was established to accelerate the deployment of low carbon transport technologies, including electric vehicles.

Since its formation, the Low Emissions Vehicle Taskforce has been exploring the potential for further growth in the electric vehicle market and this has led to a package of measures in Budget 2018. These measures include the continuation of the existing EV purchase grant and a new grant to support the installation of home charger points for buyers of new and second-hand EVs. It is important that the public is aware of the supports available for electric vehicles. That is why I have asked the SEAI to develop an EV Public Awareness Programme which will include an awareness campaign; a driver experience roadshow which will give people the opportunity to drive an EV and experience the benefits for themselves; public sector and commercial fleet trials; and supports for electric vehicle use in car sharing.

Climate Change Policy

397. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the amount that his Department has committed to the green climate fund in each year since 2011; and the amount that it will be contributing in 2018. [50987/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): Ireland made a commitment at the Paris Climate Change Conference in November 2015 to provide at least €175 million in public funding in support of climate action in developing countries between 2016 and 2020. This support will be provided primarily for bilateral assistance in respect of climate change adaptation goals in developing countries and will come from the Vote of Irish Aid managed by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. In addition, Ireland committed to commencing contributions to the Green Climate Fund in 2016 with a view to building up our support over the coming years. In line with this commitment, which was subsequently reflected in the Programme for Partnership Government, an initial contribution to the Green Climate Fund of €2 million was made from my Department's Vote in 2016. This was part of an overall amount of €52.66 million provided by Ireland in public financial support to address climate change in developing countries in 2016.

At the recent twenty-third Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, (UNFCCC COP 23), I announced that a further contribution of €2 million would be made by the Government to the Green Climate Fund in 2017. This is part of a package of additional funding by my Department totalling €2.5 million in 2017, which also includes support for the UNFCCC's Adaptation Fund, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the NDC Partnership.

While no decisions have yet been taken in respect of contributions for 2018, any such decisions will have regard to Ireland's commitments, referred to above, regarding building up its support to the Green Climate Fund in the coming years.

Recycling Policy

398. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the estimated first and full year cost of operating a bottle deposit scheme.

[50989/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): In July 2014, the then Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government published a Review of the Producer Responsibility Initiative model in Ireland. As part of this review, a wider examination of issues within the packaging sphere (which includes bottles) was undertaken and consideration was given to the introduction of a deposit and refund scheme. The review report did not recommend the introduction of a deposit and refund scheme and concluded that to establish such a scheme was inappropriate, in view of the operation of the existing successful packaging scheme (operated by Repak). It also pointed to current policies concerning household waste collection and the high administrative costs of introducing such a system.

Notwithstanding this, on foot of a Private Members Bill tabled by Deputy Ryan recently, I have asked the Joint Committee on Communications, Climate Action and the Environment to look at the merits of a deposit and refund scheme at a national level in the context of the associated costs and the contribution to the attainment of our national waste targets under EU legislation. I am awaiting the outcome of this before taking any further action.

I am not aware of estimates for the cost of operating a deposit and refund system for any packaging in Ireland. However, a study carried out in Scotland on the subject estimates set-up and annual administration costs to be in the region of £77 million.

Questions Nos. 399 and 400 answered with Question No. 395.

Mobile Telephony Services

401. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the amount that his Department has spent each year since 2011 on improving mobile phone coverage. [50993/17]

406. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the amount that his Department has spent on the national mobile phone and broadband taskforce in 2016 and to date in 2017. [51001/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): I propose to take Questions Nos. 401 and 406 together.

Providing telecommunications services, including mobile phone services, is a matter for the relevant service providers operating in a fully liberalised market regulated by the Commission for Communications Regulation (ComReg), as independent Regulator. Over the last five years the telecoms industry has invested €3.3bn in Ireland, including €850m invested in acquiring spectrum under the 2012 Multi-Band Spectrum Auction run by ComReg. As a result of this investment 4G data services are available to more than 90pc of the population.

My Department's role in relation to the Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce is principally focussed on working with all of the stakeholders to progress the 40 actions. In relation to actual direct spending, my Department incurred no expenditure in 2016. This year to date, spending of €6,572.87 can be directly attributed to the Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce. This includes €3,834.28 towards the National Stakeholder Forum and €2,738.59 towards the Taskforce stand at the National Ploughing Championships.

Questions Nos. 402 and 403 answered with Question No. 394.

Departmental Agencies Funding

404. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the amount of funding that his Department has allocated to the Digital Hub Development Agency each year since 2011; and the amount that his Department has allocated for 2018. [50999/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): My Department provides funding to the Digital Hub Development Agency (DHDA) which was established under the Digital Hub Development Agency Act 2003 to support digital entrepreneurship through the creation of a cluster of enterprises focused on digital content and technology. The agency is funded through a combination of Exchequer funding and commercial income. The following table sets out my Department's allocation for the Digital Hub Development Agency in the years 2011-2017 and the proposed allocation for 2018:

Year	Departmental Allocation (Current)	Departmental Allocation (Capital)	Total Allocation
2011	€2.939m	€0.556m	€3.495m
2012	€2.157m	€0.55m	€2.707m
2013	€2.145m	€0.35m	€2.495m
2014	€1.95m	€0.35m	€2.3m
2015	€1.75m	€0.35m	€2.1m
2016	€1.588m	€0.35m	€1.938m
2017	€1.076m	€0.6m	€1.676m
2018	€0.872m	€0.15m	€1.022m

Question No. 405 answered with Question No. 395.

Question No. 406 answered with Question No. 401.

Mobile Telephony Use

407. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the membership of the national mobile phone and broadband task force and the salaries associated with the task force. [51002/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): The Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce was established in July 2016, membership of the Taskforce is set out in the table below:

Membership	-
Denis Naughten, T.D. (Co-Chair)	Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment
Heather Humphreys, T.D. (Co-Chair)	Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs.

Membership	-
Katherine Licken	Assistant Secretary (Working Co-Chair) Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment
William Parnell	Assistant Secretary (Working Co-Chair) Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs
Mairead McCabe	Principal Officer Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment
Stjohn O'Connor	Principal Officer Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs
Patrick Neary	Chief Technology Officer Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment
Dave Walsh	Assistant Secretary Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government
Ray O'Leary	Assistant Secretary Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport
Pat Gallagher	Chief Executive Chairman CCMA and CE Westmeath County Council
Tommy Ryan	Chief Executive CE Cavan County Council
Geoffrey Gray	Policy Analyst Competition and Consumer Protection Commission
Pat Maher	Director of Network Management Transport Infrastructure Ireland
John Sydenham	Commissioner Office of Public Works
Martin Bourke	Principal Officer Office of Public Works
John K Dillon	Senior Financial Adviser NewERA
Seamus Boland	CEO Irish Rural Link Ltd
Mary MacNamara	Irish Country Women's Association
Linda Doyle	Director of CTVR (Computer Science) Professor of Engineering and the Arts (Electronic and Electrical Engineering), Trinity College Dublin
John Martin	Former Principal Planning Adviser Department of Environment, Community and Local Government
Prof. Cathal O'Donoghue	Teagasc Rural Economy and Development Programme
Paul Madden	Enterprise Champion - Midlands Action Plan for Jobs
Clodagh Cavanagh	Abbey Farm Machinery, Business Representative
ObserverGerry Fahy	Commissioner Commission for Communications Regulation (ComReg)

The members of the Taskforce did not receive salaries for their participation in the Taskforce.

The Taskforce published its final report in December 2016. Arising from this report an implementation group was established charged with overseeing implementation of the Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce actions. The implementation group comprises of senior offi-

cials from the following organisations:

- Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment
- Department of Rural and Community Development
- Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government
- Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport
- Transport Infrastructure Ireland
- County and City Management Association
- Local Government Management Agency
- Advertising Standards Authority for Ireland
- Commission for Communications Regulation (which sits on the Group as both the owner of several actions and as an observer in its capacity as the independent Regulator of the telecommunications sector).

Officials from other organisations attend as appropriate.

There is no additional remuneration paid for membership of the implementation group; all officials attending do so in the course of their normal duties.

Mobile Telephony Services

408. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if his attention has been drawn to the ongoing concerns in relation to poor mobile telephone coverage in areas such as counties Cavan and Monaghan; if he has discussed with the communications regulator the need for the telecommunications companies to make the necessary investments to ensure that all areas have adequate mobile coverage; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51162/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): Providing telecommunications services, including mobile phone services, is a matter for the relevant service providers operating in a fully liberalised market regulated by the Commission for Communications Regulation (ComReg), as independent Regulator. I do not have statutory authority to require commercial companies to rollout services and make specific investments in particular locations. The ComReg consumer helpline is accessible at consumerline@comreg.ie and I would urge consumers who feel they have not received an appropriate response from service providers to make contact with the Regulator. Notwithstanding ComReg's independence, I recognise the frustration felt by Irish consumers - including in Counties Cavan and Monaghan - where telecommunications networks are not always delivering the services people expect. Accordingly, I specifically included in the Programme for Government a commitment to a Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce. In July 2016, I established the Taskforce to identify immediate solutions to broadband and mobile phone coverage deficits and investigate how better services could be provided to consumers, prior to the full build and roll-out of the network planned under the National Broadband Plan State intervention.

The Taskforce worked with key stakeholders to produce the December 2016 report available on my Department's website, which contains 40 actions to alleviate some of the deficits.

The Implementation Group I co-chair with Minister Kyne is overseeing implementation of the actions and comprises all key stakeholders responsible for delivery. This includes ComReg, who attend as both an action owner, and in an observer capacity in their role as the independent Regulator. Three meetings of the Implementation Group have been held so far - on 8 March, 5 July and 22 November.

This week I published the third Taskforce Quarterly Progress Report, which demonstrates that good progress has been made in delivering the actions. These reports show continuing progress and also the sustained level of engagement between actions owners and industry.

This engagement was clear in October at first National Stakeholder Forum in Athlone, which I hosted with Minister Kyne. It arose from the Taskforce's recognition that, given the rapid technological change and the emergence of new equipment and solutions to deliver telecommunications services, stakeholders needed an opportunity to raise concerns on impediments to the rollout of services. Issues impacting on rollout were discussed at the Forum, and there were also some new recommended actions for the Taskforce to help improve services to consumers and in preparing for roll-out of the National Broadband Plan network, once contracts are in place.

The Taskforce's achievements to date include:

- Funding of all local authorities to assign a Broadband Officer;
- Close cooperation with local authorities to develop local digital strategies, including Government working closely with local authorities to identify approximately 320 high speed Strategic Community Access Hubs to be connected at an early juncture after award of the NBP contract;
- ComReg's development of a testing regime to check mobile handset performance which will inform consumers in choosing products and network services. ComReg will also develop a new network coverage map.
- Most local authorities applying waivers in respect of development contributions for telecoms development.
- Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) has constructed 80km of ducting on the M7/M8 corridor and 14km on the N25 in Cork, with more following in the coming months to help expedite infrastructure roll-out. TII is also reviewing the cost of duct access for telecoms.

In tandem with the work of the Taskforce, the release by ComReg of the 3.6GHz radio spectrum band, which has been identified at EU level as a primary band suitable for the introduction of 5G, will also contribute to addressing increasing mobile data demands and improve mobile coverage. Mobile operators' commercial investment has also resulted in improved services, following ComReg's 2012 multi-band spectrum auction. At least one operator now has in excess of 90% 4G population coverage.

All of these initiatives should assist in enhancing the quality of mobile phone and data services, particularly in rural areas such as Counties Cavan and Monaghan.

Broadband Service Provision

409. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his plans to improve broadband telecommunications service throughout County Cavan; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that households and many small enterprises

have concerns regarding the service that exists at present; if the necessary investment programme will be undertaken to bring this broadband service up to a proper standard; the improvements which can be expected in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51163/17]

410. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his plans to improve broadband telecommunications service throughout County Monaghan; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that households and many small enterprises have concerns regarding the service that exists; if the necessary investment programme will be undertaken to bring this broadband service up to a proper standard; the improvements which can be expected in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51164/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): I propose to take Parliamentary Questions Nos. 409 and 410 together.

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 I published an updated High Speed Broadband Map which is available at www.broadband.gov.ie. This 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 National Broadband Plan (NBP).

The Map is colour coded and searchable by address/eircode:

- The AMBER areas represent the target areas for the proposed State led Intervention under the NBP and are the subject of an ongoing procurement process.

- The BLUE represent those areas where commercial providers are either currently delivering or have plans to deliver high speed broadband services.

- The 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.

There are nearly 42,000 premises in Cavan. Approximately 17,000 (40%) fall within the AMBER area and will be covered under the State led Intervention. Nearly 19,000 (45%) of premises are in a BLUE area and are or will be covered by commercial providers, while approximately 6,000 (15%) are LIGHT BLUE and fall to be covered by eir's planned rural deployment.

There are approximately 33,000 premises in Monaghan. Just over 15,600 (47%) fall within the AMBER area and will be covered under the State led Intervention. Nearly 14,000 (42%) of premises are in a BLUE area and are or will be covered by commercial providers, while approximately 3,500 (11%) are LIGHT BLUE and fall to be covered by eir's planned rural deployment.

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. 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 approximately 75,000 premises in Counties Cavan and Monaghan) 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.

Electric Vehicles

411. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the estimated first and full year cost of extending toll waivers to electric and hybrid vehicles. [50964/17]

412. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the estimated first and full year cost of extending toll waivers to electric and hybrid vehicles. [50988/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 411 and 412 together.

The Government is committed to facilitating an increased uptake of electric vehicles (EVs). The Deputy may be aware that my Department and the Department of Communications, Climate Action and the Environment (DCCAE), have jointly convened an interdepartmental LEV Task Force to consider the range of measures and options available to Government for the purpose of accelerating the deployment of low carbon technologies, especially electric vehicles (EVs). The wide ranging work of the Taskforce has been divided between three working groups addressing: Market Growth Stimuli and Visibility; Infrastructure, Energy Regulation and Pricing; and Planning Legislation, Building Regulations and Public Leadership. As part of its programme of work, Working Group 1 of the Taskforce, which is chaired by my Department, is assessing options for potential Government and public body leadership initiatives and opportunities, as means of further demonstrating support for LEV uptake. To this end, Working Group 1 considered recently a TII paper on options for incentive toll rates for EV drivers. Although the modalities are still under consideration I have secured funding in Budget 2018 to introduce a toll incentive regime which I hope could be introduced early next year.

In relation to extending the cost of toll waivers to electric and hybrid vehicles, it is estimated based on 2015 figures that the average toll paying motorist pays €100 in tolls per year. At cur-

rent penetration levels of electric and plug-in hybrid vehicles on the road in Ireland and assuming a full toll waiver that would equate to a cost of approximately €230,000 over the course of a full year. This full waiver cost would rise to an estimated €2 million should the target level of 20,000 electric vehicles by 2020 be reached.

Electric Vehicles

413. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the amount that his Department has allocated to a scheme to encourage the use of electric vehicles among taxi drivers for 2018. [51003/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I was delighted to secure funding as part of Budget 2018 to support a range of low carbon transport options, including the transition of our SPSV (Taxi/Hackney/Limousine) sector to electric vehicles. This sector plays a vital role in championing the use of electric vehicles to members of the public, and in reducing harmful tailpipe emissions particularly across our urban areas.

€5.5m is allocated in 2018 and €29m from 2019-2021 for the Carbon Reduction Programme to fund measures to support decarbonising the transport sector.

A 'Green Public Transport Fund' will support use of low carbon technology in the public transport fleet e.g. emerging low emission technologies, particularly for buses. The fund will bridge the price differential between conventional and alternative fuelled vehicles and infrastructure.

Funding will also be targeted in support of the LEV Taskforce's efforts to increase electric vehicle (EV) uptake e.g. encouraging the transition of the national taxi fleet to alternative technologies including the new EV Taxi Grant and introduction of a tolling incentive.

The electric SPSV grant scheme will be administered on behalf of the Department by the National Transport Authority (NTA). Opening to applicants from 01 February 2018, the electric SPSV grant scheme will be available nationwide and will offer a grant of up to €7,000 euro for the purchase of a battery electric vehicle (BEV) and up to €3,500 euro for the purchase of a plug in hybrid vehicle (PHEV). Second hand electric vehicles will also be eligible for the scheme (at pro rata reduced grant rates) up to a maximum age of 6 years.

The scheme can be used in conjunction with an existing range of supports including the NTA WAV grant scheme in the case of an electric WAV; and the SEAI commercial grant scheme for new electric vehicles.

Further details of the electric SPSV grant scheme will be made available on the NTA website and SPSV industry newsletter.

Haulage Industry Regulation

414. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of the process to introduce a maximum regulatory weight laden limit for five or more axle non articulated trucks; the information available to support the change; his plans to meet the key industry stakeholders before the change is implemented; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50730/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Five axle non-articu-

lated trucks (rigids) are a relatively recent phenomenon on Irish roads. Across the EU there is no maximum weight 'norm' for such vehicles and a lacuna in Ireland's Construction and Use Regulations has meant that a maximum weight limit for such vehicles has hitherto remained unstipulated.

It is precisely to correct this regulatory anomaly that Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII), in conjunction with the Road Safety Authority (RSA), were tasked with analysing the pavement wear effects of this 39 tonne variant, as well as the associated vehicle standard related requirements attaching to the operation of 5 axle rigids in Ireland.

The results of TII's commissioned study concluded that, because of their shorter wheel base they impacted negatively on both our bridge infrastructure and pavements. In circumstances, where in real terms, road maintenance funding has been severely cut over successive years, it was therefore recommended that the maximum regulatory weight limit for such vehicles should be set at 36 tonnes and will come into effect on 1 January 2018.

The results of TII's study were presented to the Society of the Irish Motor Industry and other interested industry representative bodies.

A regulatory exemption, subject to certain technical requirements and manufacturer approval, will however apply to those rigids with five (or more) axles which are in service before 1 January 2018.

Rail Network Safety

415. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if funding will be provided to Waterways Ireland or another relevant body to upgrade the footpath and provide lighting between Broombridge station and the new developments at Pelletstown in view of the fact that commuters face a dangerous journey between the two locations at present and the current situation will limit the number of persons using the new Luas service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50756/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As the Deputy is aware, plans have been developed for a new train station at Pelletstown, approximately mid-way between Broombridge and Ashtown railway stations. As well as serving this area with a new train station, this facility also incorporates a pedestrian/cycle bridge over both the railway and the canal at this location. This will link with the canal towpath on the north side of the canal, allowing pedestrians to use the canal tow path to walk to Broombridge railway station/Luas stop, where there will be another pedestrian bridge spanning the canal and railway.

In relation to Pelletstown Station, planning permission is in place and work is currently on-going 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 National Transport Authority expect to be able to advise a firm timeline for the construction of this station very early next year.

Driver Test Data

416. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the level of delays for driving tests by county; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50779/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The average waiting times for driving tests at all centres are available on the Road Safety Authority (RSA) website at www.rsa.ie/en/RSA/Learner-Drivers/The-Driving-Test/Test-Waiting-Times. The average waiting time is an average of current waiting times for applicants at each Test Centre. Applicants will have waiting times both longer and shorter than the average.

The RSA is currently undertaking initiatives in order to increase capacity to deliver extra driving tests. These initiatives include the recruitment of additional driver testers and the delivery of 120 extra overtime tests per driver tester who participates. Other measures include initiatives to reduce the number of applicant no-shows at the driving test, and to reduce the number of non-conducted driving tests. The Authority plans to introduce a new test booking system in 2018 that will give test applicants much more control over their booking and appointment choice.

The Authority is committed to working with any applicants that require an urgent appointment. A priority list system is in place whereby cancelled test appointments are made available for such applicants. Over 1,000 tests are cancelled by driving test applicants weekly and these slots are subsequently offered to applicants who require urgent test appointments.

While I accept that current waiting times remain too high, I am assured that the measures the RSA has put in place will have the desired effect of reducing waiting times to the public.

Driver Licence Renewals

417. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if consideration has been given by his Department to establish a mechanism by which emigrants may renew their driving licences whilst remaining resident abroad in view of the ongoing plight of the undocumented Irish; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50817/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Irish driver licensing operates within a framework of EU law. Under EU law, Member States may issue driving licences only to those normally resident in their jurisdiction.

A person may remain ‘normally resident’ if they are out of the country for fixed-term contract of work or for a fixed period of study.

However, we cannot issue driving licences to people who have taken up residence abroad.

Cycling Policy

418. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to raise the awareness of safety for cyclists and proposals for the co-operative use of infrastructure by cyclists and vehicles; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50819/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I am acutely aware of the importance of safety for our cyclists and I am very conscious of the increase in cycling fatalities this year. My Department continues to work with and fund key stakeholders to address how road users behave on our roads in order to promote a safe and respectful approach from all users sharing the public road space.

The Road Safety Authority, which operates under the aegis of my Department, continues to do great work to get this important message across. The RSA’s ‘Cycle Smart, Cycle Safe’

campaign directly addressed safety issues for cyclists, including equipment check, Rules of the Road, sharing the road and proper signalling procedures. The RSA continually addresses road safety issues for all road users - including raising awareness of how other road users should interact safely with cyclists - and it actively engages with a variety of key stakeholders across a wide range of media.

Measures to ensure road safety in our communities include the Road Safety Act 2016 which created legislation to have a 20km/h speed limit, and I hope to see local authorities making use of this important new provision. In 2015 on-the-spot fines were introduced for several cycling offences, including cycling 'without reasonable consideration' and 'cycling in a pedestrianised street or area'. My Department also funds Cycle Right and the Green Schools Travel programmes, which help provide quality cycle training for children.

I am also conscious of the key contribution that cycling can play as part of an integrated Public Transport strategy. Census 2016 recorded a steep rise in the numbers cycling to work. That growing trend will be catered for by providing a network of safe cycling facilities that will encourage increased numbers to adopt what is a convenient and healthy mode of transport. As traffic levels rise in urban areas, cycling will play an increasing role in alleviating congestion and contributing to economic success.

That can be supported by investment in high quality cycling infrastructure, and I am pleased to inform the Deputy that as part of Budget 2018 I have secured increased allocations for safe cycling infrastructure over the period 2018-2021. Over €110m will now be available specifically for the development of cycling and walking infrastructure in the Greater Dublin Area and Regional Cities over the next four years to provide safe alternative active travel routes to help alleviate congestion by providing viable alternatives and connectivity with existing public transport infrastructure. In addition, the considerable investment of about three-quarters of a billion euro for re-configuring the bus network and infrastructure over the coming years will also deliver the construction of significant new cycling facilities alongside bus routes on the key radial routes into the city centre and provide safe cycling arrangements, largely segregated from other traffic, along those corridors. Some of the €135m funding that will be provided to local authorities in the GDA and the Regional Cities for Sustainable Urban Transport will support better traffic management, bus priority measures and pedestrian infrastructure - which will benefit the safe and effective movement of all. Finally, in the area of Greenways, in the recent Budget there was more than a doubling of the investment available up to 2021, with a capital allocation now of over €55m to deliver Greenway projects. All of these investments will contribute to a considerable improvement in the cycling infrastructure available over the next few years.

Bus Éireann Services

419. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the steps he is taking to improve a service (details supplied) in view of the number of complaints regarding this service and the inconvenience caused to persons; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50848/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The issue raised is a matter for the National Transport Authority (NTA) in conjunction with Bus Éireann 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.

Capital Expenditure Programme

420. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the amount of capital expenditure that his Department plans to invest into transport, tourism, and sport each year for the next four years, in tabular form. [51004/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Full details on the allocations for each of my Department's subheads for 2018 will be set out, as usual, in the Revised Estimates Volume (REV). In the meantime my Department is in discussion with relevant agencies regarding the details of allocations. The Government has also proposed that a ten year national investment plan will be set out which will take account of the National Planning Framework. My Department will also take that into account when setting infrastructure investment priorities over the coming years.

On Thursday, 12 October, I outlined my view of what our current priorities for investment are to the Dáil and I have also published further details in a separate speech which is available at <http://www.dttas.ie/speeches/2017/minister-ross-budget-2018-speech>.

I would ask the Deputy to note that some of the information, he is seeking is detailed in chapter 18 of Expenditure Report 2018, which can be found at the following link: <http://www.budget.gov.ie/Budgets/2018/Documents/Part%20II%20-%20Expenditure%20Allocations%202018-20.pdf>.

Cycling Facilities Funding

421. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the amount that his Department will spend on cycleways in 2018. [51005/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I am pleased to inform the Deputy that, as part of Budget 2018, I secured a significant increase in the level of Exchequer capital funding available for investment in cycling infrastructure over the period 2018-2021.

Capital investment of over €110m will develop cycling and walking infrastructure in the Greater Dublin Area and Regional Cities over the next four years (2018-2021), €8m of which is allocated to 2018. This programme will provide safe alternative active travel routes to help alleviate congestion by providing viable alternatives and connectivity with existing public transport infrastructure.

My Department is also currently preparing a National Greenways Strategy, building on the success of facilities such as the Great Western Greenway and the Waterford Greenway. Budget 2018 saw an increase of €30 million in the allocation for Greenways bringing the total allocation for the development of Greenways for the period 2018-2021 to over €55 million, with €3.6m specifically allocated to 2018.

In addition to these cycling-specific investments, some other infrastructure investments over the new four years will provide enhancements that will benefit cyclists. The considerable investment of about three-quarters of a billion euro for re-configuring the bus network and infrastructure will also entail construction of significant new cycling facilities alongside bus routes on the key radial routes into the city centre and provide safe cycling arrangements, largely segregated from other traffic along those corridors. In addition, some of the €135m funding that will be provided to local authorities in the GDA and the Regional Cities for Sustainable

Urban Transport will support better traffic management, bus priority measures and pedestrian infrastructure - which will benefit the safe and effective movement of all.

As part of an overall coordinated approach to the provision of an integrated sustainable transport network of cycling, walking and public transport, these various investments will allow us to further increase the numbers cycling, thereby easing congestion, improving public health and enhancing the liveability of our cities; the investment will, I believe, have a lasting transformative effect on our transport network over the coming years.

Local Improvement Scheme Expenditure

422. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the amount that his Department has spent on the local improvements scheme in each year since 2011; and the amount that will be allocated in 2018. [51006/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Due to the major cut-backs in roads funding resulting from the financial crisis it was necessary for my Department to cease making separate allocations to local authorities in respect of the Local Improvement Scheme (LIS) in 2011. Since then local authorities have had the option of using a proportion of their Discretionary Grant for LIS should they wish to do so. The decision on whether to allocate funding for LIS and the management of the allocation process has been a matter for each local authority.

Minister Ring's Department is now taking the lead regarding the LIS having launched a scheme in September 2017 and I understand further funding will be allocated by that Department in 2018.

Park and Ride Facilities

423. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of rail journeys that are initiated from park and ride stations each day. [51007/17]

424. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of passengers using park and ride facilities each day. [51008/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 423 and 424 together.

The collection and collation of transport statistics is a matter for the National Transport Authority (NTA) in conjunction with the relevant transport operators and I have forwarded the Deputy's questions to the NTA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a response within ten working days.

Electric Vehicles

425. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the estimated number of electric and hybrid vehicle registrations that will take place each year up to 2023, by vehicle type. [51010/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The Govern-

ment is committed to facilitating the increased uptake of low emitting vehicles (LEVs). It is Ireland's ambition that all new cars and vans sold in this country from 2030 will be zero emission (or zero emission-capable) and my Department's long-term vision for the decarbonisation of the transport sector will encompass the electrification of the passenger car fleet.

In May of this year I published the National Policy Framework for Alternative Fuels Infrastructure for Transport in Ireland (NPF) (link is external). My Department, together with the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (DCCAE), developed the NPF to support the deployment of alternative fuels for transport in Ireland arising from obligations associated with Directive 2014/94/EU (link is external) and assist in removing any barriers that exist towards greater uptake of low emissions vehicles (LEVs). Included in this framework was an indicative forecast of the numbers of alternative fuelled vehicles that could be circulating at particular milestones up to 2030 based on a policy ambition that all new cars sold in Ireland post-2030 will be zero emissions or zero emissions capable. These are the published projections.

	2015	2020	2025	2030
Electric passenger cars (BEVs and PHEVs)	2020	20,000	250,000	800,000
Electric light duty vehicles	152	5,000	12,500	23,000
Electric heavy duty vehicles	4	0	0	5
Electric diesel hybrid buses	1	1	0	0
Full electric buses**	0	5	100	450
Electric motorcycles	171	250	1000	5000

Public Service Obligation Data

426. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the amount of PSO subvention that has been paid to Bus Éireann, Irish Rail, Dublin Bus, and Luas since 2011, by year and company. [51011/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Since 2010 however there is no PSO subvention paid directly by my Department to transport operators. The award and subvention of PSO contracts now falls under the independent statutory remit of the National Transport Authority (NTA), which has direct responsibility for this area and I have therefore forwarded the Deputy's Question to the NTA for direct reply.

Regional Road Network

427. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the amount that has been allocated to the regional and local roads grants scheme for 2017 and 2018.

[51013/17]

439. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the amount allocated for the maintenance of local roads in 2017 and 2018. [51025/17]

440. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the amount allocated for the maintenance of regional roads in 2017 and 2018. [51026/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 427, 439 and 440 together.

Each year the Department prepares and lodges in the Dáil Library regional and local road grant allocation and end of year payment booklets. Details of the regional and local road allocations for 2017 are, therefore, available in the Dáil Library. The total allocation for 2017 is €324.3 million.

The main grant schemes operated by the Department are focussed on specific policy objectives i.e. surface sealing to protect the road surface from water damage (Restoration Maintenance Grants), road strengthening based on pavement condition rating to lengthen the life of roads (Restoration Improvement Grants) and a Discretionary Grant Scheme which covers various activities including provision for winter maintenance. These three grant programmes account for most of the grant funding and are allocated based on the length of the road network in a particular local authority area. Local authorities can also apply each year for bridge rehabilitation grants based on condition ratings and for safety improvement schemes to address particular hazards.

In view of the fact that national roads and regional roads account for about 45% and 30% of overall road traffic respectively, the main requirement related to the Restoration Improvement and Maintenance Grants is that a minimum of 15% is expended on regional roads. Apart from that local authorities decide on allocations for regional and local roads.

As regards 2018, it is expected that the grant allocations will be announced in January.

Rail Network Expansion

428. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the amount that has been spent on the Metro north project to date in 2017. [51014/17]

429. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the estimated cost of completing the Metro north project. [51015/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 428 and 429 together.

As the Deputy is aware, funding of over €700 million has been allocated under the Government's present Capital Plan 2016-2021 for planning, design and construction of new Metro North. Funding in the initial years of the Capital Plan is for planning and design work with construction work commencing in 2021 and passenger services starting in 2027.

The estimated cost of completing the new Metro North project is €2.4 billion. The forthcoming ten-year National Investment Plan will include the funding for the period to complete this significant addition to public transport.

I have forwarded the Deputy's question to the National Transport Authority for information

in relation to expenditure to date in 2017 on the Metro North project. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a response within ten working days.

Rail Network Expansion

430. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the amount that has been spent on the DART expansion project to date in 2017. [51016/17]

431. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the estimated cost of completing the DART expansion project. [51017/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 430 and 431 together.

As the Deputy is aware, the National Transport Authority's (NTA) Transport Strategy for the GDA 2016-2035 proposes implementation of the DART Expansion Programme. The original cost of the overall DART Expansion Programme (including the DART Underground Tunnel element) was estimated at €4 billion, of which €3 billion was in respect of the tunnel as originally designed. The Government decided in September 2015 that the original proposal for the tunnel should be redesigned to provide a lower cost solution. I understand that the NTA's work on this is expected to be completed soon.

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. This includes funding of about €230 million for mainline rail and DART capacity enhancement. This 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 information in relation to expenditure in 2017 on the DART Expansion Programme. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a response within ten working days.

Road Projects Expenditure

432. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the estimated cost of completing the M20 Cork to Limerick motorway project. [51018/17]

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 (TII), formerly the National Roads Authority (NRA) under the Roads Acts 1993 to 2015 in conjunction with the local authorities concerned.

Noting the above position, I have referred the Deputy's question to the TII for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you don't receive a reply within 10 working days.

Departmental Expenditure

433. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his Department's planned capital spend for each year until 2025, by project. [51019/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Full details on the allocations for each of my Department's subheads for 2018 will be set out, as usual, in the Revised Estimates Volume (REV). In the meantime my Department is in discussion with relevant agencies regarding the details of allocations. The Government has also proposed that a ten year national investment plan will be set out which will take account of the National Planning Framework. My Department will also take that into account when setting infrastructure investment priorities in the years up to 2027. This National Investment Plan is likely to be published in the coming weeks.

I have already outlined my view of what our current priorities for investment are to the Dáil and I have also published further details in a separate speech which is available at <http://www.dttas.ie/speeches/2017/minister-ross-budget-2018-speech>.

Road Projects Expenditure

434. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the estimated cost of completing the Narrow Water bridge project. [51020/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Options are still being appraised in accordance with the terms of the Fresh Start Agreement in relation to the proposed bridge at Narrow Water and there is, therefore, no cost estimate available for the completion of the project.

Road Projects Expenditure

435. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the estimated cost of completing the A5 Donegal road. [51021/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The planning and implementation of the A5 project, including management of the project budget and expenditure, is the responsibility of the Northern Ireland authorities.

The Stormont House Agreement and Implementation Plan - A Fresh Start - sets out the Government's commitment to contribute £75 million towards the cost of Phase 1 of the project (Newbuildings to north of Strabane) once the planning process in Northern Ireland is completed.

Traffic Management

436. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the amount that his Department has budgeted for implementing congestion measures on the M50, M40 and M11. [51022/17]

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 na-

tional roads programme. The planning, design and implementation of individual road projects is a matter for Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII), formerly the National Roads Authority (NRA) under the Roads Acts 1993 to 2015 in conjunction with the local authorities concerned.

Noting the above position, I have referred the Deputy's question to the TII for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you don't receive a reply within 10 working days.

Electric Vehicle Grants

437. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the amount that his Department has allocated to a scheme to incentivise the use of electric vehicles among taxi drivers for 2018. [51023/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I was delighted to secure funding as part of Budget 2018 to support a range of low carbon transport options, including the transition of our SPSV (Taxi/Hackney/Limousine) sector to electric vehicles. This sector plays a vital role in championing the use of electric vehicles to members of the public, and in reducing harmful tailpipe emissions particularly across our urban areas.

€5.5m is allocated in 2018 and €29m from 2019-2021 for the Carbon Reduction Programme to fund measures to support decarbonising the transport sector.

A 'Green Public Transport Fund' will support use of low carbon technology in the public transport fleet e.g. emerging low emission technologies, particularly for buses. The fund will bridge the price differential between conventional and alternative fuelled vehicles and infrastructure.

Funding will also be targeted in support of the LEV Taskforce's efforts to increase electric vehicle (EV) uptake e.g. encouraging the transition of the national taxi fleet to alternative technologies including the new EV Taxi Grant and introduction of a tolling incentive.

The electric SPSV grant scheme will be administered on behalf of the Department by the National Transport Authority (NTA) and will open to applicants early next year.

Further details of the electric SPSV grant scheme will be made available soon and will be on the NTA website and SPSV industry newsletter.

Electric Vehicles

438. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the amount of funding that will be available to individual taxi drivers who wish to switch to the use of electric vehicles; the conditions of this scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51024/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I was delighted to secure funding as part of Budget 2018 to help encourage the transition of our SPSV (Taxi/Hackney/Limousine) sector to electric vehicles. This sector can play a vital role in championing the use of electric vehicles to members of the public, and in reducing harmful tailpipe emissions particularly across our urban areas.

The electric SPSV grant scheme will be administered on behalf of the Department by the National Transport Authority (NTA) and will open to applicants early next year.

Further details of the electric SPSV grant scheme will be made available soon and will be on the NTA website and SPSV industry newsletter.

Questions Nos. 439 and 440 answered with Question No. 427.

Child Detention Centres

441. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the cost per week of a juvenile prisoner in a detention centre; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [51096/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): In 2016, Oberstown Children Detention Campus was provided with funding totalling €20.713 million. Oberstown provided 54 detention places in 2016. They consist of 48 male detention places and 6 female detention places. The weekly cost for one detention place is €7,376.

Child Detention Centres

442. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the annual cost of a juvenile prisoner; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [51097/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): In 2016, Oberstown Children Detention Campus was provided with funding totalling €20.713 million. Oberstown provided 54 detention places in 2016. They consist of 48 male detention places and 6 female detention places. The annual cost for one detention place is €383,574.

Child Detention Centres

443. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of children in detention centres; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [51100/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): As of this morning (28/11/2017), there are currently 49 children detained in Oberstown Children Detention Campus. Oberstown is the national children detention campus. Of the 49 children, 18 are remanded by the courts and 31 are serving a period of detention following a conviction by the courts. Of the 18 on remand, 17 are male and 1 is female. Of the 31 on committal, 30 are male and 1 is female.

There are also 10 children currently on the pilot Bail Supervision Scheme who otherwise would have been remanded in custody to Oberstown by the courts. The Bail Supervision Scheme provides more therapeutic supports in the community for children who are subject to bail conditions. The service provides a ‘wraparound’ service to the young person and their family with a prescribed reporting system back to the courts through the appropriate statutory bodies; Probation Service, An Garda Síochána and Oberstown. The scheme offers a particular option to the courts not to detain the child in Oberstown, in the knowledge that closer monitoring will take place through interaction with the young people, their families and communities.

Visiting Teacher Service

444. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the estimated full-year cost of restoring the visiting teacher service for Travellers to primary and post primary schools. [51121/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): As the Deputy may be aware, the Visiting Teachers Service for Travellers was discontinued with effect from September 2011, in line with Department of Education and Skills policy on the phasing out of segregated Traveller provision.

The Department of Education and Skills have advised that the funding costs for the programme in the final full year of the programme in 2010 were €2,716,737.

Foster Care

445. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the statutory basis for the national standards in foster care. [50776/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The current National Standards for Foster Care, published by the Department of Health and Children in 2003, have no basis in statute.

Departmental Funding

446. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if an extension to the period within which an early years capital grant of €50,000 must be spent by a community project (details supplied) in County Kilkenny will be approved in view of the fact that the building project is at roof level. [50878/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Similar to many government capital grant schemes, capital funding is made available to the Department of Children and Youth Affairs on an annual basis for use within that year.

In 2017, €8.4 million Early Years Capital funding was granted to service providers in a very competitive process to create new childcare places as well as increasing the quality of existing childcare facilities.

In particular for the largest grants under Early Years Capital 2017, those grants falling under Strand 1 of up to €50,000, some services experience pressure in relation to the time needed to complete their projects. In these circumstances, services are encouraged to contact Pobal directly to consider what options are available to them. Nonetheless, in accordance with the public spending rules applicable to the capital schemes, funding granted in 2017 must be spent in 2017 and therefore extensions beyond 31 December 2017 cannot be considered.

In relation to the childcare service provider you mention, I have asked Pobal to contact them directly and liaise further on this matter.

Departmental Funding

447. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the amount that her Department has allocated to the learner fund each year since 2013; and the amount her

Department has allocated for 2018. [50965/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The Learner Fund was first launched in 2013 but allocations have not taken place on a simple year by year basis, rather new phases of the Learner Fund have been launched on the basis of gauged demand and need in the Early Years sector.

Since 2013, there have been four phases of funding for further education courses in Early Childhood Care and Education accredited by Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI), and two phases of funding for those in the Early Years sector who have pursued degree relevant degree programmes (in the form of a bursary payment). The total amount of allocated over all phases of funding is 4.2 million. The following table offers a breakdown of funding allotted to each phase.

Allocation	Learner Fund 1	Learner Fund 2	Learner Fund 3	Learner Fund 4	Bursary 2017 (R1)	Bursary 2017 (R2)	Total
Total	€1,299,604	€838,807	€406,283	€915,280	€621,000	€162,750	€4,243,724

The total amount allocated for this fund in 2018 is 2 million.

Departmental Functions

448. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the amount allocated to each county under learner funds 1, 2, 3 and 4. [50966/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): As the funding was administered in part through the County and City Childcare Committees (CCC), I am able to provide a county by county breakdown of funding, however, funding has always been offered on a national level and not on a county by county basis. The allocation of funding to each county area is a direct reflection of the uptake of the opportunity offered through the Learner Fund and the demand for further education and training that existed in the EY sector in that area at the time. My Department placed no restrictions on the share of the available funding that could be accessed through each CCC.

Allocation	Learner Fund 1	Learner Fund 2	Learner Fund 3	Learner Fund 4	Bursary 2017 (R1)	Bursary 2017 (R2)	Total
	€	€	€	€	€	€	€
Carlow County Childcare Committee	7,085	2,130	8,240	9,420	0	4,500	31,375
Cavan County Childcare Committee	4,980	8,070	6,150	11,400	9,000	3,000	42,600
Clare County Childcare Committee	55,752	31,566	2,700	24,810	14,250	2,250	131,329
Cork City Childcare Committee	45,016	12,612	123	15,720	10,500	3,000	86,971
Cork County Childcare Committee	124,528	38,408	12,360	46,500	42,750	7,500	272,046
Dun Laoghaire Rathdown CC	30,838	43,946	73,170	29,160	28,500	3,750	209,365

Questions - Written Answers

Allocation	Learner Fund 1	Learner Fund 2	Learner Fund 3	Learner Fund 4	Bursary 2017 (R1)	Bursary 2017 (R2)	Total
Donegal County Childcare Committee	7,610	3,015	2,040	13,200	26,250	12,000	64,115
Dublin City Childcare Committee	207,438	157,306	52,590	108,240	50,250	6,750	582,574
Fingal County Childcare Committee	86,156	109,589	37,680	75,120	30,750	6,000	345,295
Galway City and County Childcare Committee	35,199	52,180	21,720	66,300	45,750	12,000	233,149
Kerry County Childcare Committee	33,316	3,120	14,490	18,720	9,750	4,500	83,896
Kildare County Childcare Committee	78,827	59,906	23,085	59,290	45,000	24,000	290,108
Kilkenny County Childcare Committee	13,331	3,229	3,120	21,420	16,500	750	58,350
Laois County Childcare Committee	58,913	23,062	7,200	33,900	21,000	9,750	153,825
Leitrim County Childcare Committee	5,867	4,410	2,820	1,540	3,000	750	18,387
Limerick Childcare Committee	37,828	36,220	12,960	41,040	12,750	1,500	142,298
Longford County Childcare Committee	1,410	105	9,900	6,000	3,000	2,250	22,665
Louth County Childcare committee	29,252	26,480	7,440	39,780	12,750	8,250	123,951
Meath County Childcare Committee	124,588	34,448	21,445	47,730	31,500	6,000	265,711
Mayo County Childcare Committee	16,337	6,452	960	10,680	21,000	6,750	62,179
Monaghan County Childcare Committee	8,755	3,485	4,920	13,330	20,250	750	51,490
Offaly County Childcare Committee	7,804	7,830	4,320	12,000	6,000	6,000	43,954
Roscommon County Childcare Committee	10,388	15,278	3,860	8,480	12,750	5,250	56,006
Sligo County Childcare Committee	23,319	12,925	1,920	10,080	11,250	2,250	61,744
South Dublin Childcare Committee	82,253	73,763	30,030	85,440	30,000	4,500	305,986

Allocation	Learner Fund 1	Learner Fund 2	Learner Fund 3	Learner Fund 4	Bursary 2017 (R1)	Bursary 2017 (R2)	Total
Tipperary Childcare Committee Limited	57,395	25,958	8,520	18,120	20,250	10,500	140,743
Waterford Childcare Committee	13,940	10,903	2,400	13,230	14,250	750	55,473
Westmeath County Childcare Committee	26,023	2,700	8,250	25,250	11,250	3,000	76,473
Wexford County Childcare Committee	20,003	9,960	6,270	16,500	21,750	3,000	77,483
Wicklow County Childcare Committee	45,452	19,753	15,600	32,880	39,000	1,500	154,184
Total	1,299,604	838,807	406,283	915,280	621,000	162,750	4,243,724

Departmental Programmes

449. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of persons who have benefitted from the learner fund each year since 2013. [50967/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The Learner Fund was first launched in 2013 but allocations have not taken place on a simple year by year basis, rather new phases of the Learner Fund have been launched on the basis of gauged demand and need in the Early Years sector.

Please see the following table which highlights the number of person who have benefitted from the learner fund each year since 2013.

Learner Fund Rounds	Learner Fund Recipients
LF1 April 2014	1,609
LF2 November 2014	1,089
LF3 October 2015	572
LF4 January 2016	860
Bursary February 2017	863
Bursary November 2017	217

Early Childhood Care and Education Data

450. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the amount of capitation that has been paid to early childhood care and education facilities since 2011, by year. [50968/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): It is my understanding that the Deputy is referring to the capitation payments paid to childcare providers for providing the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme. Please see the following table, which contains the relevant information.

Programme Year	Amount paid
ECCE 2010-2011	€155,640,509
ECCE 2011-2012	€160,721,189
ECCE 2012-2013	€160,616,357
ECCE 2013-2014	€160,897,983
ECCE 2014-2015	€162,695,265
ECCE 2015-2016	€178,181,687
ECCE 2016-2017	€273,993,749.80
ECCE 2017-2018 (To date)	€75,175.585.77

Departmental Funding

451. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the funding that her Department has allocated to a programme (details supplied) in 2017. [50970/17]

452. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the funding that her Department has allocated to a programme (details supplied) for 2018. [50971/17]

453. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the funding that her Department allocated to a programme (details supplied) in the years 2015 and 2016. [50972/17]

454. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the funding that her Department has allocated to a programme (details supplied) in 2017. [50973/17]

455. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the funding that her Department has allocated to a programme (details supplied) since 2014. [50974/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I propose to take Questions Nos. 451 to 455, inclusive, together.

The National Síolta Aistear initiative was established in late 2016. Its purpose is to provide central support and coordination of Síolta (The National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education) and Aistear (The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework) implementation across the Early Years sector. The Síolta Quality Assurance Programme (QAP) and professional development in Aistear are resourced through the National Síolta Aistear initiative. This initiative is funded by DCYA and is a joint initiative between DCYA, DES and NCCA.

The National Síolta Aistear Initiative is recorded on the same expenditure line within my Department's allocation and its first allocation was in the 2017 budget.

The allocation for this initiative in 2017 was €500k and I'm pleased to confirm that this level of allocation will be repeated in 2018.

Child Care Services Data

456. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of children eligible under bands A, AJ, B and D, respectively, by age bracket. [50975/17]

457. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the funding that her Department provided to bands A, AJ, B and D in 2017; and the amount she has allo-

cated to same in 2018. [50976/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I propose to take Questions Nos. 456 and 457 together.

In the 2017/2018 programme year the bands and eligibility have changed with children who would have qualified for band B in 2016/17 now being spilt between band B and a new band, band D. These ‘September Measures’ include a universal payment together with an average 50% increase to the band rates of the CCS/CCSP targeted schemes.

It is estimated that the full-year cost of extending childcare subsidy rates for band A, band AJ and band B beneficiaries of the CCS scheme, in addition to the new band D being created in respect of children who are entitled to hold the over 6 GP visit card and a new universal payment (for children who are between the ages of 6 months until the age they qualify for entry into the ECCE scheme) would be approximately €90 million (€20 million of which relates to CCSU). It should be noted that these estimates are subject to fluctuations based on numbers of eligible children registering and parental behaviours in relation to attendance etc.

Funding for childcare programmes is allocated by programme, not by band. To assist the Deputy in her query I am providing the following table which shows a breakdown of the costings for the number of children for the 2016/17 & 2017/18 programme years.

	2016/17 costs	2016/17 No. of children	2017/18 Estimated costs	2017/18 CCS* No. of children	2017/18 CCSP No. of children
Band A	€27,739,819	14,121	€60 m	12856	5779
Band AJ	€5,841,370	4,459	€12 m	2086	1322
Band B	€6,621,952	8,452	€12 m	3213	4475
Band D	N/A	N/A	€6 m	421	304

*These figures relate to the proposed band rate as CCS registrations are still provisional.

Please note the figures for 2017/18 are up to date however registrations continue to come in throughout the year.

A child must be under 15 years of age to be eligible for CCS & CCS Plus, all figures in the above table relate to this age bracket.

Central Statistics Office Data

458. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of children here, by their household’s income bracket (details supplied). [50977/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The Department of Children and Youth Affairs does not compile data on the number of children according to gross income per household nor does it hold data in the format requested. This is a matter for the CSO who are under the aegis of the Department of the Taoiseach.

Child and Family Agency Data

459. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of Tusla registered creches, by county. [50978/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): There are 4,496 early years services registered with Tusla. The following table contains a breakdown of these services, by county, as requested by the Deputy.

County	Number of Services
Carlow	49
Cavan	64
Clare	147
Cork	479
Donegal	146
Dublin	1196
Galway	284
Kerry	130
Kildare	194
Kilkenny	97
Laois	82
Leitrim	33
Limerick	197
Longford	35
Louth	114
Mayo	130
Meath	206
Monaghan	60
Offaly	72
Roscommon	55
Sligo	70
Tipperary	166
Waterford	96
Westmeath	82
Wexford	144
Wicklow	168
Total Services Registered	4496

Child and Family Agency Data

460. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the capacity of Tusla registered creches, by county. [50979/17]

461. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the capacity of Tusla registered creches for the provision of care to children under one year of age, by county. [50980/17]

462. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the capacity of Tusla registered creches for the provision of care to children under two years of age, by county. [50981/17]

463. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the capacity of Tusla registered creches for the provision of care to children under three years of age, by county. [50982/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I propose to take Questions Nos. 460 to 463, inclusive, together.

The capacity of Tusla registered crèches, by county, is as follows.

County	Capacity of Registered Services
Carlow	2,042
Cavan	2,924
Clare	4,291
Cork	17,684
Donegal	5,239
Dublin	46,222
Galway	10,146
Kerry	4,815
Kildare	8,074
Kilkenny	3,137
Laois	3,176
Leitrim	1,143
Limerick	6,990
Longford	1,713
Louth	4,239
Mayo	3,993
Meath	7,367
Monaghan	2,740
Offaly	2,380
Roscommon	2,005
Sligo	2,291
Tipperary	5,369
Waterford	3,735
Westmeath	3,252
Wexford	4,759
Wicklow	5,120
Total	164,846

It is important to note that the information provided refers to the number of children each service states it can accommodate at registration. The figures refer to the number of children the service can accommodate at any one time and do not capture the total number of children in daily or weekly attendance. For example, a sessional service may have a capacity of 80 children but can cater for up to 160 children in a single day by running morning and afternoon sessions.

Tusla does not collate information on capacity by age range.

However, my Department does hold the requested data for those childcare providers who are in contract with my Department to run one of the Government childcare schemes (ECCE, CCS and TEC) through the Early Years Sector profiles. While this would not account for all Tusla registered childcare providers, it must be noted that in order to enter into contract with my Department, a provider must be registered with Tusla.

The most recent data on capacity within childcare services is contained within the Early

Questions - Written Answers

Years Sector Profile 2016 - 2017. 3,707 providers responded to the survey in May 2017 (representing a response rate of 84%), with the Profile published in November 2017. The following tables outline the capacity for the all age ranges, 0-12 months, 12-24 months, and 24-36 age range per county, as reported in the 2016-2017 sector profile. The response rate for each county is also included.

All age ranges	Reported Capacity	Response Rate
Carlow	2,318	79%
Cavan	3,082	94%
Clare	4,570	87%
Cork City	4,509	84%
Cork County	14,153	83%
Donegal	6,381	90%
Dublin - Dublin City	16,208	83%
Dublin - Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown	7,237	80%
Dublin - Fingal	11,201	84%
Dublin - South Dublin	9,004	84%
Galway	10,046	81%
Kerry	5,779	91%
Kildare	7,879	77%
Kilkenny	3,744	84%
Laois	3,591	84%
Leitrim	1,021	84%
Limerick	6,236	74%
Longford	1,768	97%
Louth	4,129	77%
Mayo	4,437	90%
Meath	6,760	83%
Monaghan	3,681	92%
Offaly	2,341	77%
Roscommon	2,374	85%
Sligo	2,763	78%
Tipperary	6,448	92%
Waterford	3,941	78%
Westmeath	4,133	92%
Wexford	5,464	87%
Wicklow	4,928	82%
Total	170,126	84%

Up to 1 year (0-12 months)	Reported Capacity	Response Rate
Carlow	56	79%
Cavan	65	94%
Clare	109	87%
Cork City	104	84%
Cork County	274	83%
Donegal	122	90%

Up to 1 year (0-12 months)	Reported Capacity	Response Rate
Dublin - Dublin City	528	83%
Dublin - Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown	298	80%
Dublin - Fingal	228	84%
Dublin - South Dublin	244	84%
Galway	228	81%
Kerry	117	91%
Kildare	153	77%
Kilkenny	44	84%
Laois	60	84%
Leitrim	23	84%
Limerick	150	74%
Longford	39	97%
Louth	33	77%
Mayo	41	90%
Meath	112	83%
Monaghan	92	92%
Offaly	20	77%
Roscommon	42	85%
Sligo	64	78%
Tipperary	124	92%
Waterford	65	78%
Westmeath	52	92%
Wexford	88	87%
Wicklow	69	82%
Total	3,644	84%

Up to 2 years (0-24 months)	Reported Capacity	Response Rate
Carlow	196	79%
Cavan	248	94%
Clare	383	87%
Cork City	536	84%
Cork County	925	83%
Donegal	505	90%
Dublin - Dublin City	1,908	83%
Dublin - Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown	908	80%
Dublin - Fingal	855	84%
Dublin - South Dublin	849	84%
Galway	820	81%
Kerry	471	91%
Kildare	535	77%
Kilkenny	240	84%
Laois	221	84%
Leitrim	83	84%

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Up to 2 years (0-24 months)	Reported Capacity	Response Rate
Limerick	480	74%
Longford	160	97%
Louth	256	77%
Mayo	208	90%
Meath	403	83%
Monaghan	348	92%
Offaly	104	77%
Roscommon	141	85%
Sligo	283	78%
Tipperary	501	92%
Waterford	260	78%
Westmeath	256	92%
Wexford	374	87%
Wicklow	227	82%
Total	13,684	84%

Up to 3 years (0-36 months)	Capacity Reported	Response Rate
Carlow	429	79%
Cavan	580	94%
Clare	856	87%
Cork City	1,273	84%
Cork County	2,045	83%
Donegal	1,164	90%
Dublin - Dublin City	4,107	83%
Dublin - Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown	1,875	80%
Dublin - Fingal	1,856	84%
Dublin - South Dublin	1,877	84%
Galway	1,844	81%
Kerry	1,006	91%
Kildare	1,401	77%
Kilkenny	607	84%
Laois	539	84%
Leitrim	199	84%
Limerick	1,056	74%
Longford	348	97%
Louth	670	77%
Mayo	591	90%
Meath	930	83%
Monaghan	780	92%
Offaly	282	77%
Roscommon	351	85%
Sligo	590	78%
Tipperary	1,166	92%
Waterford	694	78%

Up to 3 years (0-36 months)	Capacity Reported	Response Rate
Westmeath	695	92%
Wexford	961	87%
Wicklow	633	82%
Total	31,405	84%

RAPID Programme

464. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the level of RAPID programme funding on an annual basis in each of the years 2010 to 2016; the allocations for 2017 and 2018, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50948/17]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): RAPID (Re-vitalising Areas by Planning, Investment and Development) is aimed at funding projects which will enhance the lives of residents in disadvantaged urban areas and provincial towns. The current RAPID programme is managed locally by the Local Community Development Committees, with support from Local Authorities.

The first table that follows sets out funding provided under RAPID from 2010 to 2016.

The second table provides the allocation for 2017 and the indicative allocation for 2018. The total allocation in 2017 is €5 million. Each Local Authority administrative area received an allocation of €64,500 for RAPID for 2017, with an additional €2.5 million ring fenced for the Dublin North East Inner City area. In addition, €0.5 million is available to honour legacy commitments. These include my Department's contractual commitments under previous RAPID projects, mainly under the Sports Capital Scheme.

Year	Outturn €'000s
2010	6,067
2011	2,269
2012	3,062
2013	261
2014	170
2015	317
2016	32

Year	Allocation €'000s
2017	5,000
2018	5,000 indicative

National Broadband Plan Administration

465. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the number of local authorities with a full-time equivalent broadband officer as of November 2017. [50994/17]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): All 31 local authorities currently employ a Broadband & Telecommunications Officer.

The National Broadband Plan is a Government priority and the Broadband & Telecommu-

nications Officers play a key role in supporting its delivery and in ensuring the overall success of the project.

Broadband & Telecommunications Officers also play a important role in the ongoing improvement of telecommunications and broadband services throughout the country by assisting industry with commercial development, through engagement with key stakeholders at regional fora, and through engagement with local communities and businesses.

Given the importance of the Broadband & Telecommunications Officers to the National Broadband Plan and to the improvement of regional telecommunications in general, my Department will continue to part-fund the employment of a Broadband & Telecommunications Officer in each local authority in 2018.

Departmental Funding

466. **Deputy Denise Mitchell** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the level of funding provided to a charity (details supplied) in each of the years 2015, 2016 and 2017; his plans to increase the level of funding; if funding will be provided for the positions of an education officer and an information officer; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51244/17]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): I am advised that my Department has not provided funding to the charity referred to by the Deputy.

Mobile Telephony Services

467. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the amount that his Department has spent in each year since 2011 on improving mobile telephone coverage. [50904/17]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): Responsibility for telecommunications policy falls, in the first instance, under the remit of the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment.

However, my Department has been supporting the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment in improving mobile phone coverage across Ireland through the Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce.

This Taskforce was established in July 2016 to examine solutions to addressing broadband/mobile phone coverage deficits and to identify tangible actions that can be taken in the short-term to improve the quality of services being provided.

The Taskforce published its report in December 2016, and set out 40 actions to be taken to alleviate barriers to mobile reception and broadband access. As part of the Government's commitment to follow through on these actions, an Implementation Group was established earlier this year to oversee their delivery. The Implementation Group is co-chaired by the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment, Denis Naughten T.D., and the Minister for Community Development, Natural Resources & Digital Development, Sean Kyne, T.D.

One of the recommendations made by the Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce was that each Local Authority should assign an officer with responsibility for broadband and mobile phone services.

My Department provided funding of €1.085 million (€35,000 to each local authority) during 2017 to support the assignment by each Local Authority of a Broadband and Telecommunications Officer. The remit of the Broadband and Telecommunications Officer is primarily to manage interactions with any company that is seeking to roll out telecommunications infrastructure in their county. The Broadband and Telecommunications Officer will also work with the winning bidder(s) in respect of the roll-out of the National Broadband Plan in the areas to be covered by State intervention.

Quarterly progress reports are published on the status of actions outlined in the Taskforce report, and a comprehensive annual review of 2017 progress will be completed in early 2018.

Departmental Programmes

468. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the budget allocations for the local improvement scheme in each of the years 2016, 2017 and 2018. [50935/17]

469. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the budget allocations for the town and village regeneration scheme in each of the years 2016, 2017 and 2018. [50936/17]

471. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the budget allocations for the national rural development schemes, including rural recreation and rural walks measures, in each of the years 2016, 2017 and 2018. [50938/17]

472. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the budget allocations for the CLÁR programme in each of the years 2016, 2017 and 2018. [50939/17]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): I propose to take Questions Nos. 468, 469, 471 and 472 together.

My Department delivers a variety of schemes that provide support for the sustainable development of rural communities in line with commitments in the Programme for Government and the Action Plan for Rural Development. These include the Town and Village Renewal Scheme, the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme, the Walks Scheme, the CLÁR Programme and the Local Improvement Scheme (LIS).

The following table details the budget allocations for all Rural Schemes for 2016, 2017 and 2018. Allocations for 2018 are provisional and subject to the publication of the revised estimates volume for public services.

Scheme	Budget 2016	Budget 2017	Budget 2018
Town and Village	€4,000,000	€12,000,000	€15,000,000
Rural Recreation	€3,283,000	€7,553,000	€10,383,000
Walks Scheme	€2,000,000	€2,000,000	€2,000,000
CLÁR	€100,000	€5,100,000	€5,100,000
LIS	€0	€10,000,000	€10,000,000

Peace and Reconciliation Programme

470. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development

the budget allocations for the PEACE programme in each of the years 2016, 2017 and 2018. [50937/17]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The Programme for Peace and Reconciliation 2014-2020 (PEACE IV) is a cross-border programme co-financed through the European Union's European Regional Development Fund. It supports peace and reconciliation through actions that promote social and economic stability in Northern Ireland and the Border Region of Ireland (Cavan, Donegal, Leitrim, Louth, Monaghan and Sligo).

The total value of the current PEACE programme is €270m. Some €229m (85%) will be provided by the EU, with the remaining €41m provided by the Irish (€9m) and UK (€32m) Governments.

My Department provides funding under three themes over the programme period - shared spaces and services, building positive relations and children and young people. The funding allocated by my Department under these themes is detailed in the attached table.

Funding of €0.5m, €0.8m and €3.7m has been allocated by my Department to the Peace and Reconciliation Programme for 2016, 2017 and 2018 respectively. Annual budget allocations will increase over the programme period in line with anticipated programme activity in relevant years.

Funding is also provided by the Departments of Education and Skills and Children and Youth Affairs. Details in relation to their roles and funding responsibilities are available from the respective Departments.

PEACE IV – Department of Rural and Community Development Allocations per Priority

The Department of Rural and Community Development is an Accountable Department under the Programme for Peace and Reconciliation 2014-2020 (PEACE IV) and provides funding under six programme objectives, detailed as follows.

Specific Objective	Title	Dept. of Rural & Community Development Contribution€m	EU Contribution€m	Total Allocated€m
2.2	Local Authority Children & Young People	0.95	5.41	6.36
3.1	Shared Spaces Capital Development	1.72	9.73	11.45
3.2	Local Authority Shared Spaces Projects	0.93	5.30	6.23
3.3	Shared Spaces - Victims and Survivors	0.57	3.24	3.81

Specific Objective	Title	Dept. of Rural & Community Development Contribution€m	EU Contribution€m	Total Allocated€m
4.1	Building Positive Relationships - Local Authority Action Plans	1.14	6.49	7.63
4.2	Building Positive Relationships - Regional Level Projects	0.53	3.01	3.54

Questions Nos. 471 and 472 answered with Question No. 468.

Leader Programmes Expenditure

473. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the actual spend to date on the Leader programme under the rural development programme 2014 to 2020, by animation, administration and project spend; the budget allocation in each of the years 2014 to 2018, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50940/17]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): LEADER is a multi-annual programme covering the period 2014-2020, with a total budget of €250 million over the period in question. €220 million of this funding has been allocated to the Local Action Groups (LAGs) throughout the country who deliver the LEADER programme. The remaining €30 million is available for schemes which will be delivered at a national level.

The €220 million funding which has been allocated to the LAGs is provided for the duration of the Programme, rather than on an annual basis. This provides greater flexibility to the LAGs in managing their resources.

Table 1 details the funding allocations provided to LAGs by county under the 2014-2020 LEADER programme. The LEADER areas are, in the main, aligned with the county boundaries. However, Co. Cork includes three LEADER sub-regional areas.

Table 2 details the overall expenditure incurred each year to date under the 2014-2020 LEADER Programme, broken down between Preparatory Support, Administration (which includes Animation), and Project expenditure.

Expenditure under the programme commenced in 2015 and relates to preparatory support payments for the preparation of Local Development Strategies. Funding Agreements for the current LEADER programme were, for the most part, signed with the LAGs in the second half of 2016 and the programme effectively became operational from that date. Project expenditure therefore only commenced in 2017.

While project expenditure currently stands at €258,000 for this year, project approvals have increased significantly since July and I understand that a total of 473 projects have been approved by the LAGs, with a combined value of €12.2 million. Payments will be made in respect of these projects as claims are submitted to my Department through the LAGs.

Table 1: LEADER 2014-2020 Allocations per County

County	Programme Allocation (€)
Carlow	6,416,803.43
Cavan	8,522,285.84
Clare	8,920,224.65
Cork	13,938,823.22
Donegal	12,913,877.86
Dublin	6,370,438.43
Galway	12,195,883.61
Kerry	10,219,868.29
Kildare	5,261,600.01
Kilkenny	7,791,572.91
Laois	7,124,586.86
Leitrim	5,998,474.74
Limerick	9,276,593.96
Longford	7,597,623.07
Louth	6,101,862.01
Mayo	11,121,431.88
Meath	6,903,123.57
Monaghan	7,592,719.51
Offaly	8,036,763.90
Roscommon	8,852,659.22
Sligo	7,655,647.81
Tipperary	10,103,443.28
Waterford	7,522,796.18
Westmeath	7,384,206.22
Wexford	9,840,140.56
Wicklow	6,336,549.00
TOTAL	€220,000,000

Table 2: LEADER 2014-2020 Expenditure broken down per year

Year	Preparatory Support	Administration	Projects	Total
2015	€1,251,185.25	€0.00	€0.00	€1,251,185.25
2016	€119,785.45	€1,141,135.00	€0.00	€1,260,920.54
2017 (to date)	€97,141.59	€9,773,303.17	€258,470.91	€10,128,916.27

Rural Development Programme Data

474. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the budget allocations for the plan for rural development in 2016, 2017 and 2018. [50941/17]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The Action Plan for Rural Development was launched in January 2017. The Plan was developed as a key instrument to manage the co-ordination of activities across Government which support rural

development.

The Action Plan focuses on supporting sustainable communities, supporting enterprise and employment, maximising our rural tourism and recreation potential, fostering culture and creativity in rural communities, and improving rural infrastructure and creativity.

The Plan contains 276 practical actions for delivery across a range of Government Departments, State agencies, and other organisations, with clear timeframes for delivery. The responsibility for funding and delivery of the individual actions rests with the relevant Department for each action.

From my own Department's perspective, key initiatives to support rural development include the LEADER programme, the Town and Village Renewal Scheme, Rural Recreation Schemes, the Local Improvement Scheme and the CLÁR programme. The allocation for the Rural Development and Regional Affairs programme area of my Department's Vote for 2017 is €80.364 million. The 2018 Estimate allocation for this programme area is €93.2 million, representing an increase of 16% year-on-year.

In addition, many of the initiatives in the Community Development programme area of my Department's Vote will support rural, as well as urban communities. These include the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP), the Community Facilities scheme, and the Senior Alerts scheme.

Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme Data

475. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the budget allocations for the social inclusion and community activation programme in 2016, 2017 and 2018. [50942/17]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) provides funding to tackle poverty and social exclusion at a local level through local engagement and partnerships between disadvantaged individuals, community organisations and public sector agencies. SICAP is funded by the Department of Rural and Community Development with co-financing from the European Social Fund and is managed locally by Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs) with support from Local Authorities. The programme actions and initiatives are delivered by Programme Implementers (PIs) across 51 Lots.

The SICAP funding allocations for 2016 and 2017 nationally was €37.5m per annum. The indicative allocation for 2018 is €38m, an increase of €0.5m.

Rural Development Programme Funding

476. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the amount prepaid to local authorities at the end of 2016 for rural development purposes; the schemes under which it was allocated, by local authority; the amount of the funding which has been spent by each local authority on each scheme to date in 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50946/17]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): As part of the Government's programme to support rural development, a number of initiatives including CLÁR, the Rural Recreation Scheme, the Town and Village Renewal Scheme, and REDZ

(Rural Economic Development Zones) were launched during 2016. In general, these initiatives were implemented through the Local Authorities.

All funding was made available in line with the sanction received from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and on the basis of funding agreements signed with the Local Authorities.

The following tables outline the amount of funding provided to each Local Authority by programme in 2016 and the most up to date expenditure information available in respect of each scheme. Unless otherwise indicated, the figures reflect the position to the end of September 2017. It should be noted that not all Local Authorities applied for, or were eligible for, every scheme.

This is the latest expenditure information available at this time. However, my Department is continuing to work closely with all relevant Local Authorities to ensure that any remaining funding allocated to them is spent promptly and in accordance with the original project proposals.

County	Total amount disbursed REDZ 2016	Grant Expenditure at the 29 Sep 2017	Total amount disbursed Town and Village Renewal Scheme 2016	Grant Expenditure at the 29 Sep 2017
Carlow	€200,000.00	€119,379.32	€380,000.00	€377,855.96
Cavan	€200,000.00	€72,500.00	€380,000.00	€260,229.25
Clare	€200,000.00	€28,736.00	€380,000.00	€345,157.00
Cork	€248,000.00	€172,700.00	€380,000.00	€0.00
Donegal	€298,000.00	€119,913.00	€380,000.00	€0.00
Dublin FINGAL DLR	€0.00	€0.00	€380,000.00	€307,074.00
Galway	€100,000.00	€4,995.00	€380,000.00	€228,862.00
Kerry	€150,195.00	€150,195.00	€380,000.00	€368,221.00
Kildare	€100,000.00	€79,206.00	€380,000.00	€139,263.00
Kilkenny	€200,000.00	€150,073.00	€380,000.00	€324,831.00
Laois	€200,000.00	€149,000.00	€380,000.00	€162,940.00
Leitrim	€300,000.00	€235,177.00	€380,000.00	€380,000.00
Limerick	€300,000.00	€0.00	€380,000.00	€284,507.00
Longford	€350,000.00	€263,282.00	€380,000.00	€380,000.00
Louth	€100,000.00	€58,000.00	€380,000.00	€380,000.00
Mayo	€150,000.00	€108,906.00	€380,000.00	€380,000.00
Meath	€200,000.00	€98,700.00	€380,000.00	€298,260.00
Monaghan	€290,000.00	€81,295.00	€380,000.00	€353,316.00
Offaly	€414,870.00	€29,697.31	€380,000.00	€37,890.68
Roscommon	€100,000.00	€100,000.00	€380,000.00	€276,086.00
Sligo	€800,000.00	€322,000.00	€380,000.00	€380,000.00
Tipperary	€699,221.00	€281,526.00	€380,000.00	€282,728.00
Waterford	€100,000.00	€0.00	€380,000.00	€380,000.00
Westmeath	€192,000.00	€20,745.00	€380,000.00	€301,289.00
Wexford	€100,000.00	€41,250.00	€380,000.00	€302,991.42

County	Total amount disbursed REDZ 2016	Grant Expenditure at the 29 Sep 2017	Total amount disbursed Town and Village Renewal Scheme 2016	Grant Expenditure at the 29 Sep 2017
Wicklow	€150,556.00	€21,304.00	€380,000.00	€234,151.75
Sub Total	€6,142,842.00	€2,708,579.63	€9,880,000.00	€7,165,653.06

County	Total amount disbursed CLÁR 2016	Grant Expenditure at 29th September 2019	Total amount disbursed Rural Recreation Scheme 2016	Grant expenditure at the 29 Sep 2017 Rural Recreation 2016
Carlow	€80,000.00	€80,000.00	€67,500.00	€37,134.05
Cavan*	€498,184.00	€459,381.00	€45,567.00	€30,496.00
Clare*	€284,000.00	€230,000.00	€255,625.20	€65,000.00
Cork	€562,222.40	€215,717.92	€417,815.15	€181,153.15
Donegal	€878,632.54	€518,832.59	€67,991.00	€59,831.00
Dublin FINGAL DLR	€0.00	€0.00	€33,666.94	€0.00
Galway	€392,000.00	€351,656.00	€248,950.00	€107,170.63
Kerry	€744,964.00	€589,910.00	€288,000.00	€107,642.00
Kildare	€0.00	€0.00	€0.00	€0.00
Kilkenny*	€223,000.00	€158,762.00	€0.00	€0.00
Laois	€258,900.00	€144,500.00	€256,000.00	€200,000.00
Leitrim	€274,800.00	€255,000.00	€480,000.00	€78,645.90
Limerick	€235,000.00	€235,000.00	€291,250.00	€240,000.00
Longford	€237,560.00	€167,983.09	€190,000.00	€135,000.00
Louth	€173,520.00	€111,131.00	€0.00	€0.00
Mayo	€976,869.00	€819,117.00	€455,000.00	€373,729.00
Meath	€127,600.00	€122,546.00	€50,000.00	€50,000.00
Monaghan	€356,440.00	€339,221.00	€273,014.00	€191,153.00
Offaly	€123,398.00	€117,985.00	€172,959.00	€11,143.00
Roscommon	€406,497.40	€406,497.40	€0.00	€0.00
Sligo	€598,400.00	€530,000.00	€42,562.50	€42,562.50
Tipperary	€371,000.00	€350,561.80	€85,208.00	€30,170.00
Waterford	€261,600.00	€237,900.06	€0.00	€0.00
Westmeath*	€214,280.00	€190,134.00	€219,590.00	€49,916.00
Wexford	€0.00	€0.00	€189,455.00	€75,197.00
Wicklow	€70,000.00	€0.00	€0.00	€0.00
Sub Total	€8,348,867.34	€6,631,835.86	€4,130,153.79	€2,065,943.23

* Some additional expenditure under CLÁR was reported in November 2017 by the Local Authorities indicated.

Leader Programmes Expenditure

477. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the financial allocations on an annual basis under the 2014 to 2020 rural development

programme per measure 19, support for Leader local development, in tabular form; the annual amount expended on measure 19 and to date in 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51175/17]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): LEADER, which is referred to at EU level as Measure 19, forms part of Ireland's Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 and has a total budget of €250 million over the period in question. €220 million of this funding has been allocated to the Local Action Groups (LAGs) throughout the country who deliver the LEADER programme. The remaining €30 million is available for schemes which will be delivered at a national level.

The €220 million funding which has been allocated to the LAGs is provided for the duration of the Programme, rather than on an annual basis. This provides greater flexibility to the LAGs in managing their resources.

Table 1 details the funding allocations provided to LAGs by county under the 2014-2020 LEADER programme. The LEADER areas are, in the main, aligned with the county boundaries. However, Co. Cork includes three LEADER sub-regional areas.

Table 2 details the overall expenditure incurred each year to date under the 2014-2020 LEADER Programme.

Expenditure under the programme commenced in 2015 and relates to preparatory support payments for the preparation of Local Development Strategies. Funding Agreements for the current LEADER programme were, for the most part, signed with the LAGs in the second half of 2016 and the programme effectively became operational from that date from the point of view of project commencement.

Expenditure for 2017 includes preparatory support, administration and animation costs, and project expenditure. Project approvals under LEADER have increased significantly since July and I understand that a total of 473 projects have been approved by the LAGs, with a combined value of €12.2 million. The level of expenditure under the programme is therefore expected to increase significantly as payment claims are submitted to my Department through the LAGs in respect of these projects.

Table 1: LEADER 2014-2020 Allocations per County

County	Programme Allocation (€)
Carlow	6,416,803.43
Cavan	8,522,285.84
Clare	8,920,224.65
Cork	13,938,823.22
Donegal	12,913,877.86
Dublin	6,370,438.43
Galway	12,195,883.61
Kerry	10,219,868.29
Kildare	5,261,600.01
Kilkenny	7,791,572.91
Laois	7,124,586.86
Leitrim	5,998,474.74
Limerick	9,276,593.96
Longford	7,597,623.07

County	Programme Allocation (€)
Louth	6,101,862.01
Mayo	11,121,431.88
Meath	6,903,123.57
Monaghan	7,592,719.51
Offaly	8,036,763.90
Roscommon	8,852,659.22
Sligo	7,655,647.81
Tipperary	10,103,443.28
Waterford	7,522,796.18
Westmeath	7,384,206.22
Wexford	9,840,140.56
Wicklow	6,336,549.00
TOTAL	€220,000,000

Table 2: LEADER 2014-2020 Expenditure broken down per year

Year	Total
2015	€1,251,185.25
2016	€1,260,920.54
2017 (to date)	€10,128,916.27

Community Services Programme

478. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if Pobal funding has been withdrawn for an organisation (details supplied); if so, the reason therefor; the way in which the organisation can review this decision or re-apply; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50758/17]

479. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if she has jurisdiction over funding community clubs; the reason Pobal funding has been withdrawn from an organisation (details supplied); the way in which the organisation can review this decision or re-apply; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50759/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I propose to take Questions Nos. 478 and 479 together.

The Community Services Programme (CSP) provides financial support to community companies that provide revenue generating services of a socially inclusive nature. The CSP works on a social-enterprise model which means that it does not fully fund contract holders but requires that they generate revenue by charging fees or raising funds. All CSP recipients are obliged to meet these criteria. These social enterprises also remain responsible for their own budgets and financial liabilities.

The defining characteristic of CSP services is that they are set up to provide social and economic value and are managed as going concerns with business and revenue targets set within a defined business plan. In order to assist sustainability, all CSP service providers should strive for a situation where at least 30% of annual turnover is from traded income, and where the CSP grant is not more than 50% of annual turnover. While this may not be achievable in the short-term for some service providers, it is something to focus on in the medium to long-term and business plans should be orientated towards the achievement of these benchmarks in terms of

sustainability.

Services must generate sufficient traded income to be viable and sustainable entities. Services that do not generate sufficient traded income are unlikely to be effective and risk closure and loss of services to their local areas.

The organisation referred to by the Deputy completed a business plan during 2016 as part of the CSP contract cycle. The business plan was submitted to Pobal, which operates CSP on behalf of my Department. Pobal has a proven track record in the administration of public funds and extensive experience in assessing funding applications and business plans.

Pobal assessed this plan under the five standard criteria used - capacity, sustainability, value-for-money, demonstration of need and strategic fit. Significant areas for concern were found with a number of aspects of the service. These included the following:

- Capacity: there was limited information provided within the plan and it failed to make a clear business case;

- Sustainability: while there has been a substantial drop in traded income by the organisation, there are no significant plans outlined to address this in the business plan. Traded income is below the recommended standard of 30% and CSP income is now well above the recommended standard of 50%. The organisation has provided very little information on how its board is dealing with this situation and no specific income-generating plans have been committed to;

- Demonstration of need: the evidence of need provided is considered weak and of poor quality; and

- Strategic Fit: there is little evidence of alignment to the CSP or social enterprise model. The organisation stated that "It is not a feasible project to have a traded income to support staff".

As a result of this assessment, Pobal recommended that the service should exit the CSP at the end of June 2018 and this recommendation was approved by my Department. The organisation was notified of the outcome of this process on 22 November 2016. Funding is approved for 18 months up to 30 June 2018 at a level of one manager and two full-time equivalent positions (FTEs), after which the service is due to exit the CSP.

The organisation was notified that it could appeal this decision no later than 22 December 2016 with details on the appeals procedure provided. The organisation did not pursue this avenue and the time period for accepting an appeal has passed.

It is open to the organisation to submit a new expression of interest in re-joining CSP in the future, but I would urge them to work closely with their local Pobal representatives before doing so. Any new proposal would need to meet the criteria for the CSP before being approved to go forward to business planning.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Questions Nos. 480 and 481 withdrawn.

Jobs Initiative

482. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection her plans to change the jobs initiative scheme; the reason persons working on the

scheme are being asked to transfer from their existing contracts to one year contracts; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50755/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Job Initiative (JI) scheme was launched by FÁS in 1996 and transferred to my Department with effect from 1 January 2012. A Memorandum of Agreement for the contract period is completed annually by both my Department and the sponsoring organisations (called Managing Agents) and my Department provides financial funding to schemes towards administration costs, participant and supervisor wages.

Recruitment to JI effectively ceased with effect from 10 November 2004 when the then Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment announced that, following a review of FÁS employment schemes, there would be no compulsory lay-offs from JI and that those on JI would have their contracts renewed. This had the result that those already working on the scheme could remain on JI until they either resigned voluntarily or reached retirement age. However, employees have an obligation to fulfil the terms of their employment contracts and abide by the Managing Agents' procedures.

There are no plans to change the JI scheme and participants will continue to renew their contracts on an annual basis, as required under the JI guidelines.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Invalidity Pension Applications

483. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if an application for an invalidity pension by a person (details supplied) will be expedited. [50757/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): The gentleman referred to has been awarded invalidity pension with effect from 02 November 2017. Payment will issue to his nominated bank account on 14 December 2017. Any arrears due from 02 November 2017 to 13 December 2017 (less any overlapping social welfare payment and/or outstanding overpayment) will issue in due course. The gentleman in question was notified of this decision on the 27 November 2017.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

JobPath Data

484. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the amount paid in 2016 in registration fees to companies (details supplied) for the JobPath scheme. [50762/17]

485. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of persons who were referred to the JobPath scheme in 2016. [50763/17]

486. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of participants in the JobPath scheme in 2016 who have been placed in permanent employment by each of the operators of the scheme (details supplied). [50765/17]

490. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protec-

tion the amount of job sustainment fees paid in 2016 to companies (details supplied) for the JobPath scheme. [50785/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I propose to take Questions Nos. 484 to 486, inclusive, and 490 together.

As the Deputy will be aware, JobPath is a service that supports people who are 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.

Some 65,000 Clients commenced their engagement with the service between January 1st & Dec 31st 2016.

In relation to the number of participants to find full time employment, it is important to note that jobseekers may be supported through the service for up to 30 months: under the service jobseekers have access to a personal adviser (PA) who works with them over two phases. During the first phase, of 12 months duration, the PA provides practical assistance in searching, preparing for, securing and sustaining employment. The second phase starts if the jobseeker is successful in finding work. During this phase the PA continues to work with the jobseeker for a further period of at least three months, and up to 12 months. In addition to the two phases jobseekers may also undertake training while with the service and this may extend the period the jobseeker is supported through the service for up to a further 6 months.

It will therefore take time to accumulate a sufficient number of clients (who have completed their engagement period with the service) for complete and robust outcome data to be available. The Department has, however, commenced publishing initial cohort reports on the performance of the service. The last report can be accessed on the Department's website. I can confirm that the next report will be published within the next two weeks.

The most recent cohort report published on the Department's website indicates that 19% of Jobseekers who engaged with JobPath between July 2015 and March 2016 entered full time employment (this was 36% above the weighted reference performance rate of 14%), 4% of participants entered part time employment and a further 3% entered Self-employment. Overall 26% of JobPath participants within this period had an employment outcome. In addition, this report also shows that compared to people who did not take part in the service, people who availed of the service were up to 34% more likely to find a job than those who did not. It is important to note that the outcomes for each cohort are updated every time these reports are published, to take account of outcomes that have been validated since the last publication date.

While the indications are positive, these initial reports are subject to review and are based on a small sample size and should be treated with caution.

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 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 details of payments to the JobPath companies as these are commercially sensitive. The commercial sensitivity is specifically in relation to the release of information which has the potential to influence the pricing of future contracts providing a similar service, and thereby conferring commercial advantage on one bidder over another.

The total amount paid in fees to the two companies in 2016 was €25.2m.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Departmental Communications

487. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if data transmitted between her Department's central server and local branch offices is transmitted via HTTPS or HTTP. [50770/17]

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.

Carer's Allowance Appeals

488. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of a carer's allowance appeal by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50777/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that the appeal from the person concerned was referred to an Appeals Officer who has decided to convene an oral hearing in this case.

Every effort will be made to hear the case as quickly as possible and the person concerned will be informed when arrangements for the oral hearing have been made.

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.

State Pension (Contributory) Eligibility

489. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the level of pension a person (details supplied) now qualifies for based on their number of contributions; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50782/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Entitlement to state pension (contributory) is assessed on the basis of an applicant's full social insurance record and the eligibility conditions applicable on the date the applicant reaches pension age. It is therefore not possible to predict an individual's state pension (contributory) entitlement. Eligibility is examined by a Deciding Officer following receipt of a completed application. According to the records of the Department, the person concerned will not reach pension age until 19 December 2018. The person should submit an application for pension at least 3 months in advance of that date.

A person who ceases insurable employment before reaching state pension age should, where possible, maintain their insurance record. Where an individual wishes to consider payment of voluntary contributions, in order to maintain their paid contributions insurance record, they should contact the Department's Voluntary Contributions Section, Cork Road, Waterford.

It is also open to any individual approaching pension age to apply for state pension (non-contributory). This is a means tested payment and not reliant on a social insurance contribution record. On receipt of a completed state pension (non-contributory) application, the person's entitlement will be assessed and they will be notified of the outcome. Where an individual qualifies for both pensions, the more financially beneficial rate will be paid.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Question No. 490 answered with Question No. 484.

Questions Nos. 491 and 492 withdrawn.

Exceptional Needs Payment Data

493. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the funding allocated to exceptional needs payments in each of the years 2012 to 2016 and to date in 2017; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50807/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): 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.

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.

Details of the Revised Estimate allocation and expenditure under the ENP and urgent needs payment (UNP) schemes for 2012 to 2017 are set out in the following tabular statement.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputies.

Revised Estimate Provision and Expenditure for ENP & UNP schemes 2012 to 2017.

Year	Revised Estimate Provision(million)	Outturn(million)
2012	€51.6	€52.7
2013	€47.5	€35.7
2014	€31.3	€31.3
2015	€30.4	€31.1
2016	€30.3	€32.2
2017	€31.5	€30.3 (End Oct)

Community Employment Schemes Operation

494. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if she will ensure that the focus on social inclusion is retained and copperfastened in community employment schemes; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50808/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): As the Deputy is aware, Community Employment (CE) schemes offer opportunities for the long-term unemployed to gain valuable work experience and participate in training while they are paid an equivalent to their social welfare entitlement in addition to a top up payment. Participants on CE work for 19½ hours per week. Work opportunities are within communities and, in the main, support the provision of valuable community services in areas of disadvantage.

Following the publication earlier in the year of my Department’s Report – *An Analysis of the Community Employment Programme* – the Government approved a number of changes to the terms and conditions around participation on CE. In this context, a number of changes to the CE programme were introduced from 3 July 2017. The main purpose of these changes is to broaden the availability of CE to a greater number of people on the live register and to standardise other conditions around the length of time a person can participate on the programme.

In addition the report recommends that all CE places should be categorised into one of two strands, either activation or social inclusion. The purpose of this categorisation is to acknowledge that not all CE places are the same with some places providing an opportunity for those who are very distant from the labour market to work and deliver services in their local communities.

Other places are more directly related to employment opportunities with participants getting more labour market relevant work experience. In general, each CE scheme will have a mix of both activation and social inclusion places. The target progression rate for activation places is set at 50%, given their closer links to job opportunities, while the target progression rate for social inclusion places is set at 20%. In terms of measuring the performance of CE schemes in terms of the progression of participants, regard will be had for local labour market conditions and the training and education opportunities available.

Overall, my Department is conscious of the valuable contribution the schemes are making in the provision of services to individuals and communities across Ireland.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Maternity Leave

495. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the policy regarding maternity leave and adoptive leave for women who become mothers through surrogacy in cases in which the mother has their name listed on the birth certificate; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50812/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Department of Justice and Equality have responsibility for maternity and adoptive leave which are provided for in the 1994 and 2004 Maternity Acts and the 1995 and 2005 Adoptive Leave Acts. Maternity leave is only available to the mother and adoptive leave is only available to an adopting mother or sole male adopter. My Department has responsibility for the associated social welfare payments of maternity benefit and adoptive.

With regard to registering a birth in Ireland, in the case of surrogacy, it is the birth mother who is listed as the mother on the child's birth certificate. This position was upheld by a Supreme Court decision of 2014.

As the Deputy will be aware, surrogacy is not currently regulated in Ireland. However, the Department of Health is currently developing legislative provisions on assisted human reproduction and associated issues, which will include provisions relating to surrogacy.

Any decision to change the current leave arrangements in relation to maternity and adoptive leave would be the responsibility of the Minister for Justice and Equality.

Social Welfare Benefits Eligibility

496. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if the maximum social welfare benefit is being paid to a person (details supplied); if there are further benefits they are entitled to; if their record of self employment has been considered in this case; if their spouse's pension entitlement will also be examined to determine if an increase is applicable. [50892/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The person concerned is currently in receipt of a maximum rate of state pension (non - contributory) with effect from 7 July 2017, the Friday following their 66th birthday. Prior to their 66th birthday, they were a social welfare beneficiary, as a qualified adult on their spouse's state pension (contributory) and received the maximum rate payable.

The person concerned has not applied for state pension (contributory). An application form for state pension (contributory) has been sent to the person. On receipt of a completed application, which seeks details of any periods of self employment, their eligibility for state pension (contributory) will be assessed and they will be notified of the decision on their application without delay.

The spouse of the person concerned is in receipt of a reduced rate state pension (contributory) based on an assessed yearly average of 30 contributions. According to the records of my Department, the person has a social insurance record of 1484 reckonable paid and credited contributions for the period from February 1964 to December 2013. The correct rate of contributory pension is in payment based on this record. A copy of the record relied upon by the deciding officer was provided when the decision was made and the person notified to inform the department if their record appeared incorrect or incomplete. It is noted there are no recorded

contributions for tax years 1972 to 1990/91 inclusive. In 2014, the person sought a review of self employment for 2000/01. My Department confirmed that there are no self employment contributions due for 2000/01, in line with information provided by Revenue.

If the spouse of the person concerned considers that additional contributions or credits remain missing from their record, it is open to them to forward documentary evidence of the missing periods of employment to my Department and their pension entitlement will be reviewed.

As the spouse of the person concerned is over 66 years of age, it is also open to them to apply for the means tested state pension (non-contributory). An application form was issued to the person in July 2017. No application has been received. On receipt of a completed state pension (non-contributory) application form, the person's entitlement will be assessed and they will be notified of the outcome. Where a person qualifies for both pensions, the more financially beneficial payment will be made.

Additionally, the spouse of the person concerned is in receipt of fuel allowance (payable during winter months) and the Household Benefits Package for the household.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Question No. 497 withdrawn.

Disability Support Services Funding

498. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the expenditure on the reasonable accommodation fund in each of the years 2014 to 2016 and to date in 2017; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50909/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): The reasonable accommodation fund for the employment of people with disabilities assists employers in the private sector to take appropriate measures to enable a person with a disability to have access to employment by providing a range of grants. These grants and supports include:

- the workplace equipment and adaptation grant,
- the personal reader grant,
- the job interview interpreter grant, and
- the employee retention grant.

The reasonable accommodation fund is a demand led scheme in that expenditure is incurred in response to applications received. The actual expenditure on this fund is set out in the table below.

Year	2014	2015	2016	2017*
Workplace equipment and adaptation grant	€61,776	€58,108	€54,041	€47,402
Personal reader grant	€14,499	€11,866	€16,537	€29,474

Year	2014	2015	2016	2017*
Job interview interpreter grant	€1,589	€3,950	€7,244	€5,349
Employee retention grant	€0	€0	€0	€0
Total	€77,864	€73,925	€77,822	€82,225

* Expenditure to 24 November 2017

I hope this clarifies the issue for the Deputy.

Services for People with Disabilities

499. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the job activation programmes for persons with a disability; the expenditure on same; the estimated cost of increasing expenditure by 10% on each programme, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50911/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): This Government is committed to helping more people with disabilities take up work where there is a capacity and willingness to do so.

To this end, the Department provides a range of work related supports. These supports include a wage subsidy scheme, targeted at employers, to encourage employment of people with disabilities. They also include funding for the EmployAbility service that works in tandem with the Department’s Intreo service to support people with disabilities, who wish to work, through the provision of a dedicated job coach. The Department also provides the partial capacity benefit payment for those with a reduced capacity to work. Other employment support grants for people with disabilities are also provided including a range of supports under the “reasonable accommodation fund”.

The expenditure for each of these schemes and supports in 2016 are set out in tabular form. The table also includes a column that estimates total costs if these were increased by a further 10 per cent.

-	2016 provisional cost	2016 cost plus 10%
Wage Subsidy Scheme	€19.43 million	€21.37 million
EmployAbility Service	€8.56 million	€9.42 million
Partial Capacity Benefit	€13.08 million	€14.39 million
Other employment support grants for people with disabilities	€0.45 million	€0.50 million

The table does not include details of the new “Ability” programme, which was launched in September 2017. This programme has the aim of bringing young people with disabilities who are not work-ready closer to the labour market. The funding for this programme will begin in 2018 and is expected to amount to some €10 million over a three-year period.

I trust that this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Social Welfare Benefits Eligibility

500. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the cost to the Exchequer of the following spending proposals (details supplied). [50934/17]

522. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the estimated cost of extending jobseeker payments to the self-employed, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [51222/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I propose to take Questions Nos. 500 and 522 together.

Self-employed workers who earn €5,000 or more in a contribution year, are liable for PRSI at the Class S rate of 4%, subject to a minimum annual payment of €500. This provides them with access to the following benefits: State pension (contributory) and widow’s, widower’s or surviving civil partner’s pension (contributory), guardian’s payment (contributory), maternity benefit, adoptive benefit, paternity benefit, treatment benefit (from March 2017). Entitlement to invalidity pension is being extended to the self-employed from 1st December 2017.

This compares favourably with employees who, in general, are liable to the Class A rate of 4%. In addition their employers are liable to PRSI at the rate of 8.5% on weekly earnings up to and including €376 or at the rate of 10.75% where weekly earnings exceed €376. Accordingly the combined rate of PRSI rate paid in respect of Class A employees is 12.5% or 14.75%, depending on the level of weekly earnings. These Class A employees are entitled to the full range of social insurance benefits.

The issue of extending additional social insurance benefits to the self-employed paying Class S PRSI was considered in the Actuarial Review of the Social Insurance fund (SIF) as at 31 December, 2015, which I published on the 18th October 2017. The Review, required by legislation, was carried out by independent consultants, KPMG. It examines the projected income and expenditure of the SIF over the course of the 55 year period from 2016 to 2071.

The Review found that the fund currently has a modest surplus of income over expenditure. In 2016 there was a surplus of €0.4 billion on expenditure of €8.8 billion and receipts of €9.2 billion. However, this will reduce and will return to a small shortfall in 2020. The annual shortfalls are projected to increase from 2021 onwards as the ageing of the population impacts. Projections indicate that, in the absence of further action to tackle the shortfall, the excess of expenditure over income of the fund will increase significantly over the medium to long term. The shortfall in expenditure over income is projected to increase from €0.2 billion in 2020 to €3.3 billion by 2030 and to €22.2 billion by 2071. It should be noted that as self-employed workers will be eligible to apply for invalidity pension from December 2017, the cost of this introduction has been factored into the Actuarial Review.

As part of the Review the independent consultants were required to project the additional PRSI expenditure if invalidity pension and illness, jobseeker’s and carer’s benefits were extended to Class S self-employed workers and the PRSI contribution rates required to provide these benefits on a revenue neutral basis.

The Review found that the combined cost of introducing the invalidity, illness, jobseeker’s and carer’s benefits for class S contributions is estimated to be €118 million in 2018, rising steadily to €223 million in 2020. By 2025 the projected cost is €413 million and, over the period of the review the cost would rise to €1.3 billion in 2071.

It should be noted that the projected expenditure on jobseeker’s benefit assume the same incidence rate as prevail in the employed (PRSI Class A) population. The following table gives a breakdown of the costs of the individual benefits.

Projected costs of extending Invalidity, Jobseekers Benefit, Carer's Benefits

Year	Invalidity	Illness	Jobseeker's	Carer's	Total
2015 (act)	0	0	0	0	0
2016	0	0	0	0	0
2017	3	0	0	0	3
2018	30	40	45	2	118
2019	59	54	58	3	173
2020	87	72	60	4	223
2021	125	88	63	5	281
2022	152	94	67	5	317
2023	176	99	71	5	351
2024	198	104	75	6	382
2025	218	108	81	6	413

The Review indicates that, where these benefits are extended to the self-employed, the Class S rate of PRSI contribution would need to increase substantially in order to ensure that the benefits are delivered in a revenue neutral manner. It estimates that when expenditure on the additional benefits is considered over the entire projection period, PRSI rates would need to increase by 94% under a scenario of no subvention from the Exchequer. This is equivalent to an increase of the Class S contribution rate from the current 4% rate to 7.8%.

This increased contribution is attributable to the costs of extending these additional benefits to PRSI Class S contributors. It does not take account of the value to PRSI Class S contributors of access to the range of existing benefits, and in particular State pension (contributory).

The consultants estimated that the typical cost of State pension (contributory) on its own is of the order of 10% to 15%, depending on other factors including rate of average earnings and date of commencing paying PRSI. Adding in the other benefits referenced the total Class S rate of contribution to ensure revenue neutrality would be of the order of 20% per annum.

The findings of the Review will play an important role in informing the overall debate on policy developments in relation to the Social Insurance Fund in the years ahead including the financial sustainability of the Fund given the expected demographic challenges and consideration of extending the scope of benefits for workers generally, including the self-employed.

Social Welfare Benefits Data

501. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the first and full year cost of increasing the child benefit payment by €1, €2, €3, €4, €5, €6, €7, €8, €9, €10, €11, €12, €13, €14, €15. [51108/17]

515. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the full year cost of increasing all social insurance payments by €5, €10, €15, €20 and €25, respectively, by payment, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [51215/17]

516. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the full year cost of increasing all social assistance payments by €5, €10, €15, €20 and €25, by payment, respectively, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter.

[51216/17]

518. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the full year cost of increasing the living alone allowance by €2, €3, €4, €5, €6, €7, €8, €9 and €10, respectively, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [51218/17]

519. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the full year cost of increasing the full allowance by 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 weeks, respectively, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [51219/17]

523. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the estimated cost of increasing the income thresholds for FIS by €5, €10, €15, €20 and €25, respectively, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [51223/17]

524. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the cost of increasing the carers support grant by €50, €100, €150, €200, €250, respectively, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [51224/17]

527. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the full year cost of the household benefits package; the estimated cost of increasing the monthly electricity allowance and the natural gas allowance by €5 and €10, respectively; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [51227/17]

528. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the full year cost of increasing child benefit by €5, €10, €15, €20 and €25, respectively; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [51228/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I propose to take Questions Nos. 501, 515, 516, 518, 519, 523, 524, 527 and 528 together.

The costings sought by Deputy Rabbitte and Deputy O’Dea are detailed in the following series of tables.

Table 1: Cost of increasing the Child Benefit by varying amounts

Monthly Increase	Cost€m	Monthly Increase	Cost€m
€1.00	14.60	€11.00	160.65
€2.00	29.21	€12.00	175.25
€3.00	43.81	€13.00	189.85
€4.00	58.42	€14.00	204.46
€5.00	73.02	€15.00	219.06
€6.00	87.62	€20.00	292.08
€7.00	102.23	€25.00	365.10
€8.00	116.83		
€9.00	131.44		
€10.00	146.04		

Table 2: Cost of varying amounts in all weekly social insurance payments

Scheme	Full year cost of a €5 increase	Full year cost of a €10 increase	Full year cost of a €15 increase	Full year cost of a €20 increase	Full year cost of a €25 increase
	€m	€m	€m	€m	€m

Questions - Written Answers

Scheme	Full year cost of a €5 increase	Full year cost of a €10 increase	Full year cost of a €15 increase	Full year cost of a €20 increase	Full year cost of a €25 increase
Social Insurance Schemes					
Pension Payments					
State Pension (Contributory)	102.29	204.58	306.87	409.16	511.45
Widow/er's Contributory Pension (Aged 66 and over)	21.04	42.08	63.12	84.16	105.2
Deserted Wife's Benefit (Aged 66 and over)	0.58	1.16	1.74	2.32	2.9
Death Benefit Pension (Aged 66 and over)	0.18	0.36	0.54	0.72	0.9
Working Age Payments					
Widow/er's or Surviving Civil Partner's (Con) Pension	7.57	15.14	22.71	30.28	37.85
Deserted Wife's Benefit	1.08	2.16	3.24	4.32	5.4
Invalidity Pension	17.15	34.3	51.45	68.6	85.75
Guardian's Payment (Contributory)	0.27	0.54	0.81	1.08	1.35
Disablement Pension	1.25	2.5	3.75	5	6.25
Illness Benefit	14.43	28.86	43.29	57.72	72.15
Injury Benefit	0.42	0.84	1.26	1.68	2.1
Incapacity Supplement	0.28	0.56	0.84	1.12	1.4

Scheme	Full year cost of a €5 increase	Full year cost of a €10 increase	Full year cost of a €15 increase	Full year cost of a €20 increase	Full year cost of a €25 increase
Jobseeker's Benefit	8.55	17.1	25.65	34.2	42.75
Carer's Benefit	0.74	1.48	2.22	2.96	3.7
Health and Safety Benefit	0.01	0.02	0.03	0.04	0.05
Maternity & Adoptive Benefit	5.16	10.32	15.48	20.64	25.8
Paternity Benefit	0.26	0.52	0.78	1.04	1.3
Total Social Insurance Schemes	181.26	362.52	543.78	725.04	906.3

Table 3: Cost of varying amounts in all weekly social assistance payments

Scheme	Full year cost of a €5 increase	Full year cost of a €10 increase	Full year cost of a €15 increase	Full year cost of a €20 increase	Full year cost of a €25 increase
	€m	€m	€m	€m	€m
Social Assistance Schemes					
Pension Payments					
State Pension (Non Con)	25.15	50.3	75.45	100.6	125.75
Carer's Allowance (Aged 66 and over)	0.63	1.26	1.89	2.52	3.15
Half Rate Carer's Allowance (Aged 66 and over)	1.51	3.02	4.53	6.04	7.55
Working Age Payments					
Blind Pension	0.34	0.68	1.02	1.36	1.7
Widow/ers or Surviving Civil Partner's (Non-Con) Pension	0.36	0.72	1.08	1.44	1.8

Questions - Written Answers

Scheme	Full year cost of a €5 increase	Full year cost of a €10 increase	Full year cost of a €15 increase	Full year cost of a €20 increase	Full year cost of a €25 increase
Deserted Wife's Allowance	0.03	0.06	0.09	0.12	0.15
One-Parent Family Payment	10.1	20.2	30.3	40.4	50.5
Carer's Allowance	10.88	21.76	32.64	43.52	54.4
Half Rate Carer's Allowance	2.98	5.96	8.94	11.92	14.9
Guardian's Payment (Non-Contributory)	0.13	0.26	0.39	0.52	0.65
Jobseeker's Allowance	44.88	89.76	134.64	179.52	224.4
Jobseeker's Allowance - for those aged 18 to 24 years of age	2.63	5.26	7.89	10.52	13.15
Jobseeker's Allowance - for those aged 25 years of age	0.65	1.3	1.95	2.6	3.25
Pre-Retirement Allowance	0.04	0.08	0.12	0.16	0.2
Disability Allowance	37.54	75.08	112.62	150.16	187.7
Farm Assist	2.34	4.68	7.02	9.36	11.7
Back to Education Allowance	2.48	4.96	7.44	9.92	12.4
Back to Work Enterprise Allowance	2.78	5.56	8.34	11.12	13.9
Community Employment Programme	6.07	12.14	18.21	24.28	30.35
TÚS - Community Work Placement Initiative	1.89	3.78	5.67	7.56	9.45

Scheme	Full year cost of a €5 increase	Full year cost of a €10 increase	Full year cost of a €15 increase	Full year cost of a €20 increase	Full year cost of a €25 increase
Rural Social Scheme	0.99	1.98	2.97	3.96	4.95
Gateway	0	0	0	0	0
Supplementary Welfare Allowance	4.7	9.4	14.1	18.8	23.5
Total Social Assistance Schemes	159.1	318.2	477.3	636.4	795.5

Table 4: Cost of increasing the Living Alone Allowance by varying amounts

Weekly Increase	Cost - €m
€2.00	20.87
€3.00	31.31
€4.00	41.74
€5.00	52.18
€6.00	62.61
€7.00	73.05
€8.00	83.48
€9.00	93.92
€10.00	104.35

Table 5: Cost of increasing the duration of the Fuel Allowance by varying numbers of weeks

Number of weeks	Cost in 2018 - €m
1 week	8.58
2 weeks	17.16
3 weeks	25.74
4 weeks	34.32
5 weeks	42.90
6 weeks	51.47

Table 6: Cost of increasing Family Income Supplement (FIS) by varying amounts

Increase in weekly threshold	Cost in 2018 - €m
€5.00	20.70
€10.00	42.30
€15.00	66.00
€20.00	87.60
€25.00	110.70

Table 7: Cost of increasing the Carer's Support Grant by varying amounts

Annual Increase	Cost in 2018 - €m
€50.00	5.63
€100.00	11.26
€150.00	16.89

Annual Increase	Cost in 2018 - €m
€200.00	22.53
€250.00	28.16

Table 8: Cost of Increasing the monthly electricity allowance and the natural gas allowance by varying amounts

		Monthly Natural Gas Allowance	
Monthly Increase	Cost - €m	Monthly Increase	Cost - €m
€5.00	23.30	€5.00	2.84
€10.00	46.61	€10.00	5.70

The costs shown above are on a full year basis and assume that, where relevant, each increase is implemented from the beginning of January. It should also be noted that these costings include proportionate increases for qualified adults and for those on reduced rates of payment, where relevant. These costings are based on the estimated number of recipients in 2018.

Farm Assist Scheme Data

502. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the cost of a proposal (details supplied). [51111/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The farm assist scheme supplements mostly small farms on bad agricultural land, mainly in the west of Ireland. Recipients retain the advantages of the jobseeker's allowance scheme such as the retention of secondary benefits and access to activation programmes. The 2017 Revised Estimates for my Department provide for expenditure of almost €83 million on the farm assist scheme.

Budget 2017 fully reversed the previous cuts to the Farm Assist means test. The changes included that 70% of farm income is now be assessed as means, down from 100% being assessed as means (which is equivalent to a 30% income disregard) and an additional annual means disregard of €254 for each of the first two children and €381 for the third and subsequent children.

The farm assist means test is flexible so as to allow for significant income fluctuations from one year to the next. It may also be noted that farm assist customers continue to receive more beneficial treatment than other self-employed persons as payments received under the Agri-Environment Options Scheme (AEOS), Green Low-Carbon Agri-Environment Scheme (GLAS) or Special Area of Conservation (SAC) schemes are assessed separately from other farm income. With regard to this income the first €2,540 is disregarded, and then 50% of the balance and related expenses are disregarded - with the balance being assessed as means.

It is estimated that the cost of changing the farm assist means testing rules in order that irrespective of the source of income the first €3,000 would be disregarded and the balance would be means tested at 50% is approximately €15 million for a full year. This estimate is based on the existing number of recipients and current rates.

However, it is envisaged that there would be an inflow of new farm assist claims if these measures were introduced. The Department cannot quantify the numbers involved and as such cannot calculate the associated additional costs. Therefore, the estimated cost of €15 million should be regarded as a minimum estimate.

Budget 2018 provided for a €5 per week increase in rate of payment for farm assist which will see the maximum rate increased from €193 to €198 per week from 26 March 2018.

Any changes to means assessment would have to be considered in a budgetary context.

Carer's Allowance Data

503. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of carer's allowance applications that are approved or refused on an initial application; the extent to which trends have changed in this regard over the past five years; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [51203/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The information requested by the Deputy is detailed in the table.

Carer's Allowance claims awarded or refused at initial application in 2012 to 2016 and at end October 2017

Year	Awarded	Refused
October 2017	15,002	7,555
December 2016	19,308	11,144
December 2015	14,378	7,920
December 2014	12,560	7,078
December 2013	16,011	9,881
December 2012	9,880	6,827

Child Benefit Data

504. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of families in receipt of child benefit to date; the extent to which these numbers have varied over the past five years; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [51204/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): As at 31 October 2017, child benefit was in payment to a total of 627,318 families.

The number of families in receipt of child benefit in the period 2012 to 2016 is set out in the table:

Year end	No. of Families
2016	623,141
2015	619,308
2014	615,335
2013	611,366
2012	608,733

Social Welfare Payments Administration

505. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the extent to which each sector within her Department can respond in terms of deal-

ing with applications for various means tested payments with particular reference to the need to eliminate hardship caused by delays of such payments including carer's allowance; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [51205/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): My Department operates a number of means-tested schemes and, as well as evidence of means, applicants are also required to provide evidence that they satisfy other relevant qualifying conditions for the scheme in question, for example; that they are genuinely seeking work, or that they satisfy the medical and/or the habitual residence conditions.

Long-term schemes with medical or care-related conditions are particularly complex and, consequently, applications can sometimes take some time to process. In respect to carer's allowance, particular details are required in order to establish the care recipient's care requirements, the level of care the carer is providing and the means of the applicant in order to establish entitlement.

A redesigned application form for carer's allowance will be published in 2018; this new form will allow carers to provide more information on the type and level of care they provide, with an aim to providing departmental deciding officers with the information they need to make correct decisions on entitlement as quickly as possible. The changes to the form have been finalised following consultation with Family Carer's Ireland and carer representatives.

My Department is committed to ensuring that applications are processed as soon as possible. Operational processes, procedures and the organisation of work are continually reviewed to ensure that processing capability is maximised. In addition, staffing needs are regularly reviewed, having regard to workloads and the competing demands arising, to ensure that the best use is made of all available resources.

While a person is awaiting a decision on their application and where they are experiencing financial difficulties, they may make an application for a supplementary welfare allowance (SWA) payment from their local Intreo centre.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

State Pension (Contributory)

506. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the extent to which she continues to examine the anomalies in respect of payment of the contributory State pension to persons whose contributions over their working lives are sufficient on present criteria to pay a full pension; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [51206/17]

507. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection her plans for a costing in respect of the payment of a contribution-related pension to all eligible persons; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [51207/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I propose to take Questions Nos. 506 and 507 together.

The National Pensions Framework proposed that a total contribution approach should replace the yearly average approach to the calculation of the State Pension (contributory). 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 incongrui-

ties 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 2020. I intend that its design will include significant homemaker's provisions to assist those pensioners who spent considerable periods caring for their children, or adults with a caring need.

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, and which may result in further changes.

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.

Rent Supplement Scheme Expenditure

508. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the amount of funding provided by her Department by way of rent support to families on local authority housing lists over the past fifteen years since responsibility for such payments in lieu of housing were entrusted to her Department; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [51208/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Rent supplement plays a vital role in housing families and individuals, with the scheme supporting approximately 36,200 recipients for which the Government has provided €253 million for in 2017.

Statistics are not maintained in relation to rent supplement payments made to families on local authority housing lists. Details of rent supplement recipients under the scheme in respect of the period from January 2002 to October 2017 are provided in the attached tabular statement.

Rent supplement customer numbers from 2002 (c. 54,200) increased moderately until the onset of the financial crisis reaching a peak in 2010 (c. 97,300). HAP was introduced in 2014 which transfers responsibility of persons with a long term housing need from my Department to the Local Authorities. The Government's strategic aim as set out in Rebuilding Ireland is to transfer all long-term rent supplement tenancies to HAP by 2020, with rent supplement reverting to its original purpose that of a short-term income support. Since HAP's introduction it has been the main driver for rent supplement's customer base decline with over 30,000 tenants currently in receipt of HAP support. Other contributory factors include the continuing improvement in the economy allied with people exiting rent supplement through activation and securing job opportunities.

I trust this clarifies matters for the Deputy.

Rent Supplement: Recipient Numbers & Expenditure: 2002 to Present

Year	Recipients	% Change	Cost €000	% Change
2002	54,213	20.4%	252,203	40.6%
2003	59,976	10.6%	331,471	31.4%
2004	57,874	-3.5%	353,762	6.7%
2005	60,176	4.0%	368,705	4.2%
2006	59,861	-0.5%	388,389	5.3%
2007	59,726	-0.2%	391,466	0.8%
2008	74,038	24.0%	440,548	12.5%
2009	93,030	25.7%	510,751	15.9%
2010	97,260	4.5%	516,538	1.2%
2011	96,803	-0.5%	502,747	-2.7%
2012	87,684	-9.4%	422,536	-16%
2013	79,788	-9.0%	372,909	-12%
2014	71,533	-10.3%	338,208	-9.3%
2015	61,247	-14.3%	311,059	-8%
2016	48,041	-21.6%	275,294	-11.5%
2017	36,238			

Social Welfare Schemes

509. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when the Christmas bonus will be paid; and to which categories of social welfare recipients; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [51209/17]

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.

Payment of the Bonus commenced this week from Monday 27th November and most eligible recipients will receive the Bonus this week, depending on the payment date of the scheme.

All recipients in the relevant week of the following eligible schemes will receive the Bonus, which is paid as an 85% increase to the weekly payment.

Social Assistance Schemes

- State Pension Non-Contributory
- One Parent Family Payment
- Widow(er)s' and Surviving Civil Partner's Pension (Non-Contributory)
- Deserted Wife's Allowance
- Farm Assist
- Pre-Retirement Allowance
- Community Employment
- Rural Social Scheme

- Tús
- Job Initiative
- Back to Work Enterprise Allowance
- Gateway
- Back to Work Family Dividend
- Disability Allowance
- Blind Pension
- Carer's Allowance
- Domiciliary Care Allowance
- Guardian's Payment (non-con)
- Magdalen Commission Scheme

Social Insurance schemes

- State Pension (Contributory)
- Widow(er)s' Surviving Civil Partners Pension (Contributory)
- Occupational Injuries Death Benefit Pension
- Deserted Wife's Benefit
- Partial Capacity Benefit
- Invalidity Pension
- Disablement Benefit
- Carer's Benefit
- Guardian's Payment (Contributory)

In the case of recipients of Jobseeker's Allowance, Supplementary Welfare Allowance, Direct Provision Allowance and jobseekers on the Back to Education Allowance scheme, the person must be in receipt of an eligible payment for a minimum of 15 months in order to qualify for the Bonus.

Youth Unemployment Data

510. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the extent of youth unemployment throughout the country, by county; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [51210/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The official measure of unemployment, based on the Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS) indicates that the youth unemployment rate has fallen from a peak of 31% in 2012 to 14% in October 2017. Overall youth unemployment has fallen from well above the EU average in

2012 to well below the EU average of 16.6% in September 2017 (latest Eurostat data available).

Youth unemployment statistics from the QNHS are not available at the county level.

Administrative data from the Live Register include, as well as people who are unemployed, others who are working part-time or on a casual basis and receiving partial jobseekers' payments. They may nonetheless give some indication of the trend in, if not the level of, youth unemployment, and are available at the county level. The number of young people signing on at DEASP offices in each county in October 2012 and October 2017 is set out in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Under 25 on Live Register by county Oct 2012 – Oct 17

County	Oct-12	Oct-17
Carlow County	1230	517
Cavan County	1285	513
Clare County	1523	606
Cork County	6204	1955
Donegal County	3943	1496
Dublin County	16979	6347
Galway County	3432	1161
Kerry County	2218	780
Kildare County	2797	1094
Kilkenny County	1131	423
Laois County	1577	630
Leitrim County	519	211
Limerick County	3289	1229
Longford County	910	383
Louth County	2993	1153
Mayo County	2104	753
Meath County	1645	611
Monaghan County	972	317
Offaly County	1723	677
Roscommon County	607	278
Sligo County	842	407
Tipperary County	2838	1150
Waterford County	2233	954
Westmeath County	1754	774
Wexford County	3200	1303
Wicklow County	1870	711
State	69818	26433

Overall, the number of young people on the Register has fallen by 62% over this period, with the declines at the county level ranging from 52% to 68%.

Government policy to reduce unemployment is twofold. First, through policies set out in the Action Plan for Jobs, to create an environment in which business can succeed and create jobs; and second, through Pathways to Work to ensure that as many of these new jobs and other vacancies that arise in our economy are filled by people taken from the Live Register, including young people.

The overall reduction in youth unemployment, and the indications from the Live Register that this improvement has been spread widely across the country, suggests that this approach has been relatively successful.

I am confident these policies, and continuing economic recovery, will support further reductions in youth unemployment and add to the substantial improvements that have already been seen over the last few years.

One-Parent Family Payment

511. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the extent to which persons that have lost their one-parent family allowance have had their cases reviewed to ensure the elimination of hardship; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [51211/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): My Department provides a number of income supports to lone parents once their entitlement to the One-Parent Family Payment (OFP) ceases. These include the Jobseeker's Transitional Payment (JST) payment where the youngest child is aged 7-13 years and the Jobseeker's Allowance (JA) payment which may be paid to lone parents where the youngest child is aged 14 or over. The Family Income Supplement, which is being re-designated as a Working Family Payment (WFP) is also available to lone parents who are working 19 or more hours per week. Lone parents who move to FIS/WFP can also apply for the Back to Work Family Dividend (BTWFD).

In addition to these income supports lone parents also have access to the Department's Intreo service and the associated training, education and employment supports to assist them towards employment and financial independence. A lone parent who seeks ongoing income support from the Department may receive a one to one meeting with a case officer from the Department who assists them to produce a personal development plan and guides them towards appropriate education, and employment opportunities. While the customer is on the JST payment access to these supports is available, potentially for up to seven years. This is a much broader support than the 12 month engagement that normally applies for jobseekers from their one to one meeting. The aim of this broader support is to improve the individual's employment prospects.

The income and activation supports outlined above combine to ensure that there are effective resources available to lone parents.

Social Welfare Appeals Data

512. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of appeals in respect of various payments awaiting a decision for more than two months; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [51212/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The table below provide the details which have been requested by the Deputy in respect of pending appeals.

Of the 8,898 appeals presently on hand, 4,025 (45.2%) were registered prior to 1 October 2017. Of these, 1,817 (45.1 %) are currently with the Department for review and/or the preparation of the Deciding Officer/Designated Person's appeal submission and 2,184 (54.3%) are presently with the appeals office.

The quasi-judicial nature of the appeal system impacts on appeal processing times which are proportionate to the complexity of many of the issues under appeal and often require a high level of judgement, in addition to the need to ensure due process and natural justice.

The time taken to determine an appeal reflects all aspects of the appeal process including the time spent in the Department reviewing the decision in light of the appeal contentions and/or preparing the appeal submission. As at the end of October 2017, 41% of appeals which had a favourable outcome for the appellant resulted from revised decisions taken by Deciding Officers/Designated Persons at this stage of the appeal process.

Where a decision is not revised by the Department, the file and Deciding Officer/Designated Person's submission is forwarded to the Appeals Office for consideration by an Appeals Officer. Of the 10,786 appeals which had been finalised by Appeals Officers to the end of October 2017, 42% (4,554) were determined by way of oral hearing and 57.8% (6,232) were determined by way of summary decision.

Where an oral hearing is required the logistics involved in scheduling the hearing and giving the appellant and any other witnesses, adequate notice unavoidably adds to the timeframe involved.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy

Appeals Registered prior to 1 October 2017

	No. of Appeals
Blind Person's Pension	5
Carers Allowance	526
Carers Benefit	21
Child Benefit	109
Disability Allowance	517
Illness Benefit	78
Partial Capacity Benefit	14
Domiciliary Care Allowance	204
Deserted Wives Benefit	2
Farm Assist	58
Liabile Relatives	5
Family Income Supplement	117
Invalidity Pension	175
Maternity Benefit	11
Paternity Benefit	5
One Parent Family Payment	82
State Pension (Contributory)	160
State Pension (Non-Contributory)	103
State Pension (Transition)	2
Pre-Retirement Allowance	2
Occupational Injury Benefit	13
Disablement Pension	88
Medical Care	2
Incapacity Supplement	3
Guardian's Payment (Con)	6

	No. of Appeals
Guardian's Payment (Non-Con)	1
Jobseeker's Allowance (Means)	518
Jobseeker's Allowance	522
BTW Family Dividend	14
Jobseeker's Transitional	13
Recoverable Benefits & Assistance	4
Jobseeker's Benefit	158
Treatment Benefit	-
Carer's Support Grant *	24
Insurability of Employment	121
Supplementary Welfare Allowance	319
Survivor's Pension (Con)	13
Survivor's Pension (Non-con)	6
Widows Parent Grant	4
Total on hands	4,025

* Previously called Respite Care Grant

Social Welfare Appeals Data

513. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of appeal decisions in respect of various refusals for payments that have been overturned on appeal; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [51213/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The tables below provide the details which have been requested by the Deputy in respect of 2016 and to end of October 2017.

Overall, 59.2% of the 23,220 appeals which were finalised in 2016 had a favourable outcome for the appellant, i.e. were either allowed in full or in part, or resolved by way of a revised decision by a Deciding Officer/Designated Person. To date in 2017, 59.4% of the 15,551 appeals finalised have had a favourable outcome for the appellant.

There are a number of reasons why a decision which was refused at first instance might be successful on appeal and it is not necessarily the case that the first decision was wrong.

Where new evidence is provided with an appeal the original decision may be revised by the Deciding Officer or Designated Person as was the case in some 37 per cent of favourable appeal outcomes in 2016 and 41% of favourable appeal outcomes to end of October 2017. Where the decision was not revised in the Department in light of the appeal contentions, further evidence is often provided by the appellant as the appeal process proceeds and in addition, the Appeals Officer may gain insights when they meet the appellant in person at oral hearing which may influence the outcome of the appeal.

Decisions concerning entitlement to a social welfare payment or insurability of employment often require a high level of judgment and may involve complex legal questions. The Courts have found that decision makers are required to be free and unrestricted in discharging their functions.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Outcome of Appeals by Category 2016

	Revised DO Decision	Allowed By AO	Partially Allowed By AO	Disallowed	Withdrawn
State Pension (Non-Con)	81	76	30	166	30
State Pension (Contributory)	56	33	13	201	9
State Pension (Transition)	-	1	1	2	1
Widow's/Widower's Pension (Contributory)	7	12	5	34	2
Death Benefit	-	-	-	1	0
Bereavement Grant	-	1	-	1	-
Jobseeker's Allowance - Payments	324	525	98	945	141
Jobseeker's Transitional	6	12	1	15	5
Jobseeker's Allowance - Means	338	287	120	1,216	198
One Parent Family Payment	59	89	27	121	51
Widow's/Widower's Pension (Non-Contributory)	1	5	1	14	1
Supplementary Welfare Allowance	346	532	75	923	156
Farm Assist	45	31	29	94	16
Jobseeker's Benefit	155	151	40	304	54
Deserted Wife's Benefit	-	5	1	4	1
Maternity Benefit	12	17	1	60	1
Treatment Benefits	0	0	0	6	0
Partial Capacity Benefit	7	9	0	16	3
Disability Allowance	815	2,830	88	1,367	75
Blind Pension	2	5	1	11	-
Carer's Allowance	815	1,375	145	1,237	52
Domiciliary Care Allowance	469	596	18	250	11
Respite Care Allowance	56	37	2	49	7
Illness Benefit	341	136	5	168	230
Injury Benefit	13	13	1	30	2
Invalidity Pension	642	682	10	302	18
Disablement Benefit	45	140	13	164	9

	Revised DO Decision	Allowed By AO	Partially Allowed By AO	Disallowed	Withdrawn
Incapacity Supplement	5	1	1	7	0
Medical Care	2	0	0	0	1
Carer's Benefit	32	11	3	23	2
Child Benefit	190	68	29	295	19
Family Income Supplement	177	125	18	135	15
Back To Work Family Dividend	12	1	0	49	3
Guardian's Payment (Non-Contributory)	3	10	1	5	1
Guardian's Payment (Contributory)	4	16	1	20	1
Widowed Parent Grant	2	0	0	8	1
Insurability	20	30	4	72	13
Liable Relative's	12	0	0	9	0
Recoverable Benefits & Assistance	6	9	1	12	1
TOTAL APPEALS	5,100	7,871	783	8,336	1,130

Outcome of Appeals by Category 2017 (to end of October)

	Revised DO Decision	Allowed	Partially Allowed	Disallowed	Withdrawn
State Pension (Non-Con)	68	65	30	108	24
State Pension (Contributory)	63	30	10	185	11
State Pension (Transition)	0	1	0	1	0
Survivor's Pension (Con)	7	7	0	12	1
Death Benefit	0	0	0	1	0
Bereavement Grant	0	1	0	0	0
Jobseeker's Allowance – Payments	258	310	56	595	166
Jobseeker's Transitional	8	9	3	4	5
Jobseeker's Allowance-Means	238	165	74	643	184

Questions - Written Answers

	Revised DO Decision	Allowed	Partially Allowed	Disallowed	Withdrawn
One Parent Family Payment	50	59	17	58	44
Survivor's Pension (Non-Contributory)	3	5	4	8	0
Supplementary Welfare Allowance	202	254	28	489	164
Farm Assist	25	18	18	54	11
Pre-Retirement Allowance	1	0	0	0	0
Jobseeker's Benefit	97	71	18	176	48
Deserted Wife's Benefit	0	2	0	2	0
Maternity Benefit	7	7	3	42	1
Paternity Benefit	2	0	0	2	0
Adoptive Benefit	0	0	0	2	0
Treatment Benefits	0	0	0	1	0
Partial Capacity Benefit	11	13	1	11	4
Disability Allowance	524	1,896	61	844	92
Blind Pension	1	1	1	5	1
Carer's Allowance	708	1,044	123	1,027	52
Domiciliary Care Allowance	256	264	9	113	9
Carers Support Grant	35	32	1	57	1
Illness Benefit	126	105	7	155	52
Injury Benefit	2	3	0	24	6

	Revised DO Decision	Allowed	Partially Allowed	Disallowed	Withdrawn
Invalidity Pension	618	307	6	218	17
Disablement Benefit	25	68	17	86	5
Incapacity Supplement	3	3	1	2	0
Medical Care	1	0	0	1	0
Carer's Benefit	36	18	2	33	3
Child Benefit	128	60	20	158	14
Family Income Supplement	254	58	9	111	13
Back To Work Family Dividend	3	7	0	19	5
Guardian's Payment (Non-Contributory)	2	4	1	6	0
Guardian's Payment (Contributory)	4	10	2	13	0
Widowed Parent Grant	0	0	0	1	0
Insurability	10	33	4	35	51
Liable Relative's	0	0	4	7	2
Recoverable Benefits & Assistance	3	3	0	14	0
TOTAL APPEALS	3,779	4,933	530	5,323	986

Social Welfare Eligibility

514. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if changes are required in the criteria governing cohabitation with a view to ensuring that hardship is not caused; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [51214/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The question of whether a couple is cohabiting as husband and wife or civil partners affects entitlement under the Social Welfare Acts in a number of ways:

- A person may be entitled to an increase for a qualified adult for a person who is not a husband, wife or civil partner provided the couple are cohabiting;

- A disqualification applies in various schemes where there is cohabitation, for example, under the One-parent Family Payment scheme;
- Means are calculated similarly for a cohabiting couple as for a married couple/civil partners;
- In Jobseeker's Allowance cases a limitation is applied to payment rates where the person with whom the claimant is cohabiting is also in receipt of certain Social Welfare payments.

My Department has set down the guidelines it uses in considering issues relating to cohabitation. These guidelines are updated from time to time to take into account changes to policy, legislation or best practice. These are available on the Department's website at <http://www.welfare.ie/en/Pages/Cohabitation.aspx> .

With regard to the issue of hardship, if a person does not qualify for a particular Social Welfare payment due to cohabiting, they should be advised to apply for a payment that is appropriate to their particular circumstances.

Any changes to these arrangements would involve significant costs and there no plans under consideration to change the existing criteria.

Questions Nos. 515 and 516 answered with Question No. 501.

State Pension (Contributory) Data

517. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the full-year cost of reversing the changes made in 2012 to the bands for the contributory pension; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [51217/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The changes made to State Pension (contributory) rate bands 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 person 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 EU 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.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Questions Nos. 518 and 519 answered with Question No. 501.

Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance Scheme Data

520. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the estimated cost of increasing the back-to-school clothing and footwear allowance by €5, €10, €15, €20 and €25 respectively, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [51220/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The back to school clothing and footwear allowance scheme provides a once-off payment to eligible families to assist with the costs of clothing and footwear when children start or return to school each autumn.

The rates of the payment for the 2017 scheme were increased from €100 to €125 for children aged 4 to 11 and from €200 to €250 for children aged 12 years and over. Overall the 2017 scheme has supported some 150,400 families with payments in respect of 274,000 children at a cost of over €48.5m.

Using the total number of children covered by the scheme in 2017 as a basis, the additional cost to increase the BSCFA rates by the amounts listed per age group is set out in the attached tabular statement.

Any further changes to the rates of the allowance would have to be considered within a budgetary context and the scope of the overall resources available for welfare improvements.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Full -Year Additional Cost to Increase BSCFA rates by amounts listed

Increased Payment Amount	Cost of Increase
€5	€1.37m
€10	€2.74m
€15	€4.12m
€20	€5.49m
€25	€6.86m

One-Parent Family Payment Expenditure

521. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the full-year cost of reversing changes made to the one-parent family payment in 2012, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [51221/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The cost implications of reversing changes made to the One-Parent Family Payment (OFP) in 2008 are very complex to estimate and would require significant resources and time to prepare.

There are three significant barriers to undertaking this costing exercise. Firstly, by reversing the amendments made to the OFP scheme, this would likely result in a substantial cohort of lone parents that are currently not in receipt of a social welfare payment becoming eligible and

therefore moving onto a social welfare payment. As members of this cohort are not currently in receipt of any social welfare payment, the Department currently has no visibility of them and therefore, it would be impossible to estimate the numbers involved.

Secondly, this proposal may incentivise some customers to move from alternative payments such as Jobseekers Allowance (JA), the Jobseeker's Transitional Payment (JST) and the Back to Work Family Dividend (BTWFD) back onto the OFP. It would not be possible for the Department to estimate the magnitude of this flow between schemes.

Finally, reversing the changes to the OFP would also increase the incidence of dual payments of OFP and the Family Income Supplement (FIS), which would lead to significant but unquantifiable reductions in FIS payments for some lone parents.

These unknown factors are critical to providing a reliable costing. The Department is therefore not in a position to provide the costing requested.

Question No. 522 answered with Question No. 500.

Questions Nos. 523 and 524 answered with Question No. 501.

State Pensions

525. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the full-year cost of reinstating the State transition pension; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [51225/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Social Welfare and Pensions Act 2011 provided that State pension age will be increased gradually to 68 years. This began in January 2014 with the abolition of the State pension (transition) which was available to people aged 65 who satisfied the qualifying conditions. This measure standardised the State pension age for all at 66 years. This will increase to 67 in 2021 and to 68 in 2028.

We are all aware that people are living for much longer. Life expectancy at birth has increased significantly over the years – and is now at 78.4 years for men and 82.8 years for women. This is very positive. As a result of this demographic change, the number of State pension recipients is increasing year on year. This has significant implications for the future costs of State pension provision which are currently increasing by roughly €1 billion every 5 years. The purpose of changes to the State pension age is to make the pension system more sustainable in the context of increasing life expectancy. This sustainability is vital, if the current workers, who fund State pension payments through their PRSI, are to receive a pension themselves when they reach retirement age.

In 2013, the cost of the State pension (transition) was €137 million. Its abolition was not expected to save that amount of expenditure in full, as some people who were affected would alternatively claim working age payments such as Jobseeker's Benefit (although at a lower rate than the rate of the State pension), or claim an Increase for a Qualified Adult in respect of their spouse's pension. However, it is anticipated that well over half of that cost has been saved each year as a result of this measure, and this would be expected to increase as (a) the number of 65 year olds increases, (b) the change results in a higher percentage of people working while aged 65, and (c) there have been a number of Budget increases in the rate of the State pension since then. It is estimated that the net saving in 2017 is likely to be in the region of over €80 million, and this is expected to increase over time.

The Deputy should note that there is no legally mandated retirement age in the State, and the age at which employees retire is a matter for the contract of employment between them and their employers. While such a contract may have been entered into with a retirement date of 65, in the context of the previous State pension arrangements, there is no legal impediment to the employer and employee agreeing to increase the duration of employment for one or more years, if both parties wish to do so.

Where this is not possible, there are specific measures which apply to someone claiming Jobseeker's Benefit from a date after their 65th birthday. Where qualified, these recipients may continue to be eligible for that payment until reaching pension age.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Bereavement Grant

526. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the full-year cost of reinstating the bereavement grant; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [51226/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): During the economic downturn, my Department protected primary social welfare rates and in recent years, as the economy recovered, the Government has concentrated resources in improving the core rates of payments, particularly for pensioners. Abolishing the bereavement grant provided a significant annual saving and allowed my Department to protect other core social welfare payments such as the State pension.

The number of bereavement grant claims in 2013 was 23,716, and this represented an increase of approximately 4% on 2012. Based on a similar yearly increase each year since 2013, it is estimated that the number of bereavement grant claims that might arise in 2018, were the scheme to be re-introduced, would be in the region of 28,858, and the number would be expected to increase in future years. Accordingly, if there were 28,858 such grants made in 2018, at a rate of €850 each, the cost would be €24.53 million.

Any decision to reinstate the Bereavement Grant would have to be considered in the context of overall budgetary negotiations.

It's worth noting that there are a range of supports available for people following bereavement which provide more significant support than the grant. These include weekly-paid widow's, widower's or surviving civil partner's (contributory and non-contributory) pensions, which are based on contributions or a means test, and a once-off widowed or surviving civil partner grant of €6,000 where there is a dependent child. A number of social welfare payments, including State pension, continue in payment for six weeks following a death. In Budget 2016, the Government increased the payment after death period to 12 weeks for carer's allowance. Guardian payments are available where someone cares for an orphaned child. A special funeral grant of €850 is paid where a person dies because of an accident at work or occupational disease.

Additionally, the supplementary welfare allowance (SWA) scheme provides assistance to eligible people in the State whose means are insufficient to meet their needs and those of their dependants. Under the SWA scheme, the Department of Social Protection 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 from their weekly income, which may include help with funeral and burial expenses. The Government has provided €31.5 million for

exceptional and urgent needs payments in 2017.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Questions Nos. 527 and 528 answered with Question No. 501.

Maternity Benefit

529. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the estimated cost of increasing maternity benefit by one to six weeks respectively, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [51229/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Maternity Benefit is paid by my Department and is based on payment of PRSI contributions while working. The current entitlement to paid maternity leave is 26 weeks. The table below estimates the cost of increasing the duration for which maternity benefit is paid by one to six weeks.

These estimates are based on the cost for a full year and assume that any increase in duration is implemented from the beginning of the year. The estimated additional cost of extending the duration of maternity benefit is approximately €10.3 million for each extra week, at the current rate of €235 per week. It should be noted that Budget 2018 provides for the rate of maternity benefit to be increased by €5 per week from 26 March 2018.

Estimated annual cost of increasing the duration of maternity benefit based on current rate of €235 (2017 rates)

No. of additional weeks	Estimated cost (€m)
1	10.3
2	20.6
3	30.9
4	41.2
5	50.5
6	60.8

It should be noted that this costing is subject to change in the context of emerging trends and associated revision of the estimated numbers of recipients for 2017. It should also be noted that there are additional costs to the Exchequer as these estimates do not include the costs of salary top-ups for public/civil servants.

Paternity Benefit

530. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the full year cost of increasing paternity benefit by one to six weeks respectively, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [51230/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Paternity Leave and Benefit Act 2016 which was enacted in July 2016 introduced a new scheme of paternity leave and an associated social welfare payment of paternity benefit from the 1st September 2016. Since the commencement of the scheme on 1 September 2016, 28,969 paternity benefit claims have been awarded to 31 October 2017.

The estimated additional cost of extending the duration of paternity benefit is approximately €5.5 million for each extra week. The table below estimates the additional cost of increasing the duration of paternity benefit above its current 2 week duration at the current weekly rate of €235. It should be noted that Budget 2018 provides for the weekly rate of payment to be increased by €5 per week from 26 March 2018.

Estimated annual cost of increasing the duration of Paternity Benefit based on 2017 rates

No. of additional weeks	Estimated cost (€m)
1	5.5
2	11.0
3	16.5
4	22.0
5	27.5
6	33.0

These estimates are based on the cost for a full year and assume that any increase in duration is implemented from the beginning of the year. The cost in the first year would depend on the implementation date that the increase in duration would take effect. This cost would be proportional to the full year cost.

It should be noted that this costing is subject to change in the context of emerging trends and associated revision of the estimated numbers of recipients for 2017. It should also be noted that there are also costs to the Exchequer as these estimates do not include the costs of salary top-ups for public/civil servants.

Community Services Programme

531. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the funding to community services programmes; the cost of increasing funding in line with the national minimum wage; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [51231/17]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): As the Deputy is aware, the Community Services Programme (CSP) provides financial support to community companies that provide revenue generating services of a socially inclusive nature. Many of these companies are also funded from other sources and generate revenue from the public use of their facilities and services.

A budget of just over €46m has been provided for the CSP in 2017.

The additional programme costs involved in increasing the CSP contribution to match the minimum wage would be approximately €1.9m in a full year at the current minimum wage rate and just over €3m in a full year at the proposed minimum wage rate for 2018.

The rate of CSP contribution is not aligned to the minimum wage rate of payment. The funding provided to service providers under the CSP is expressed as a fixed annual co-funding contribution towards the costs of employing a manager or a specified number of full-time equivalent positions.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Building Regulations

532. **Deputy Pat Casey** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of fines and or prosecutions levied against building owners under section 65 of the Housing Act 1966; the number of unsuccessful prosecutions under this section, by year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50735/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The information requested by the Deputy is not collected by my Department.

The issue of overcrowded dwellings is dealt with in Part IV of the Housing Act 1966. Under that Act, a housing authority may request information from the owner or occupier of a house such as will allow that authority to determine if a house can be deemed to be overcrowded, having regard to section 63 of the Act.

The housing authority may serve notice on the owner of a house specifying the maximum number of persons that may occupy a house without causing overcrowding and, where the owner of a house is causing or permitting the house to be overcrowded, may require the owner to desist from causing or permitting such overcrowding within a period not exceeding 21 days.

Any person who neglects or refuses to comply with these requirements is guilty of an offence. Overcrowding may give rise to concerns in respect of fire safety, and may lead to enforcement action by fire authorities. Situations of overcrowding should be reported to the relevant local authority.

I will shortly be introducing changes to legislation to require landlords, when registering a tenancy with the RTB, to certify that the property in question is compliant with regulations in relation to standards for rental accommodation, overcrowding and fire safety. This will mean a legally enforceable requirement on landlords to certify the quality and safety of their rental properties. Failure to provide this certification, failure to register the tenancy or, very importantly, the provision of an untrue certification, will all constitute offences, prosecutable by the RTB.

The RTB will play a key role in terms of standards and enforcement in the rental sector, and will be given the powers and the resources required to take on this enhanced regulatory responsibility. I have previously stated that this will entail a substantial programme of work that would need to be undertaken over a number of years. However, priority is being given to exploring, as a matter of urgency, the changes needed in legislation and in the Board's financing arrangements in order to make early progress in the process that will progressively see the RTB become the sector's regulator over the next two years.

Particular attention will be given to possible amendments to the provisions in relation to overcrowding, both in terms of its legal definition and the enforcement actions and sanctions applicable to such situations.

Development Contributions

533. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of local authorities applying development contributions for telecommunications infrastructure as of November 2017. [50997/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Development contributions applied by local authorities are levied on the basis of a develop-

ment contribution scheme adopted by the elected members, which sets out how contributions are to be applied in respect of developments in their respective functional areas. The level of contribution, and the types of development to which development contributions should apply, including any exemptions from charging in specific circumstances if that is deemed appropriate, are therefore determined at local authority level, in accordance with the powers vested in elected members in this regard.

The majority of development contribution schemes adopted by local authorities currently provide for charges in respect of telecommunications infrastructure development within their functional areas. I understand that, as of November 2017, the development contribution schemes of 17 local authorities include a specific charge for telecommunications infrastructure development. 13 local authorities do not include a specific charge for telecommunications infrastructure in their schemes. 1 local authority includes a specific charge for telecommunication infrastructure in their current scheme; however the amount of contribution charged has in practice since been revised to zero.

For the purpose of supporting and incentivising economic development, including the roll-out of broadband infrastructure, my Department issued statutory guidelines to planning authorities in January 2013 under section 28 of the Planning and Development Act on the implementation of development contribution schemes, which included a requirement that local authorities include a specific waiver for broadband infrastructure (masts and antennae) in their schemes. Most development contribution schemes adopted by planning authorities currently provide for such waivers. In this regard, 23 local authorities have adopted schemes which include a full exemption. Five local authorities do not specify a waiver for such infrastructure in their current scheme; however, as there is no provision included in their current schemes to charge for telecommunications infrastructure generally, the practice adopted is not to do so. My Department has been engaging with the remaining three local authorities regarding the incorporation of explicit waivers in their schemes, one of which, as mentioned above, has in any event revised the development contribution charged for telecommunications infrastructure generally under their current scheme to zero.

Motor Tax Exemptions

534. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the estimated cost of waiving motor tax for electric vehicles for each year up to 2023. [51009/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Details regarding the numbers of electric and hybrid vehicles taxed at 31st October 2017 are set out below. The cost associated with waiving motor tax would depend on the range of motor tax classes for which the waiver was proposed.

Number of Electric and Hybrid Vehicles Currently Taxed at 31st October 2017 by Motor Tax Class

Motor Tax Class	Current Motor Tax Rate	ELECTRIC	PETROL/ELECTRIC	PETROL/PLUG-IN HYBRID ELECTRIC	DIESEL/ELECTRIC	DIESEL/PLUG-IN HYBRID ELECTRIC	HYBRID	PLUG-IN HYBRID ELECTRIC	Total no. of Vehicles
Private (Engine size c.c.)									

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Motor Tax Class	Current Motor Tax Rate	ELECTRIC	PETROL/ELECTRIC	PETROL/PLUG-IN HYBRID ELECTRIC	DIESEL/ELECTRIC	DIESEL/PLUG-IN HYBRID ELECTRIC	HYBRID	PLUG-IN HYBRID ELECTRIC	Total no. of Vehicles
not over 1,000	€120	66	2						68
1,301 to 1,400	€385		332				2		334
1,401 to 1,500	€413		1,387						1,387
1,601 to 1,700	€544	1							1
1,901 to 2,000	€710		13						13
2,301 to 2,400	€1,034		6						6
2,401 to 2,500	€1,080			1					1
3,001 or more	€1,809		398				1		399
Private Co2									
A0	€120	2,540		10					2,550
A1	€170		4,054	744	4	14	2	1	4,819
A2	€180		6,985	7	33		1		7,026
A3	€190		3,496	1	383		1		3,881
A4	€200		752	1	59				812
B1	€270		636	20	3				659
B2	€280		437		1				438
C	€390		330				1		331
D	€570		2		4				6
E	€750		122						122
F	€1,200		227						227
Other									
Goods Vehicles	Various Rates Apply*	93	53	4	3				153
Agricultural Tractor	€102	3			1				4
Combine Harvester	€102				1				1
Cycle	Various Rates Apply*	29	18						47
Tricycle	Various Rates Apply*	1							1
Cycle & Sidecar	Various Rates Apply*	1							1
Hackney	€95	1	6						7
Taxi	€95	6	838	2	9				855
Limousine	€95		12		4				16
Mobile Machine	€333	2	5						7

Motor Tax Class	Current Motor Tax Rate	ELEC-TRIC	PETROL/ELEC-TRIC	PETROL/PLUG-IN HYBRID ELEC-TRIC	DIESEL/ELEC-TRIC	DIESEL/PLUG-IN HYBRID ELEC-TRIC	HYBRID	PLUG-IN HYBRID ELEC-TRIC	Total no. of Vehicles
General Haulage Tractor	€333	1							1
Forklift	€102	17							17
Exempt State Owned	€0	4	4						8
Exempt Emergency Services	€0	1							1
Exempt Diplomatic	€0	6	12						18
Exempt Special Vehicle	€0	18	341	3					362
Island Vehicle	€102	3							3
Vintage/Veteran	Various Rates Apply*	2	1		7				10
School Bus	€95		1						1
Total no. of Vehicles		2,795	20,470	793	512	14	8	1	24,593

*Note: Various rates apply to the following vehicles:

Goods vehicles (unladen weight):

- Electric (not over 1,500kg): €92
- Standard (not over 3,000kg): €333
- Standard (3,001 to 4,000kg): €420
- Standard (4,001 to 12,000kg) €500
- Standard (12,001kg or more): €900

Motorcycles and Tricycles:

- Electrical: €35
- Not over 75cc: €49
- 76cc to 200cc: €67
- 201cc or over: €88

Veteran and Vintage:

- Motorcycles: €26
- All other vehicles: €56

Planning Issues

535. **Deputy Pat Casey** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of enforcement orders that have been lodged against apartment owners for using their home for home sharing by local authorities to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50734/17]

539. **Deputy Pat Casey** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of applications for change of use by apartment dwellers for the purposes of home sharing that have been lodged in local authorities to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50822/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I propose to take Questions Nos. 535 and 539 together.

Planning statistics are compiled by each planning authority on an annual basis for collation and publication on my Department's website. The statistics collected relate to the total numbers of:

- Invalid applications received,
- Applications received for outline permission and full permission,
- Decisions to grant/refuse permission,
- Decisions issued within the statutory eight-week period,
- Decisions deferred, and
- Percentages for grants/refusals, decisions made within eight weeks and decisions deferred.

The statistics collected relate to the total number of applications and decisions for all developments that require planning permission, broken down by year and planning authority but are not broken down by development type.

Therefore, the specific information requested in relation to the number of planning applications made for a particular development type and in relation to enforcement action taken in particular cases is not collated or available within my Department's statistics. However, from next year onwards, my Department will collect information on short-term letting including in relation to enforcement action, and this will be published on my Department's website in the usual manner.

Planning Issues

536. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of decisions before An Bord Pleanála that have been delayed over the past year; the number that involved the construction of residential units; the number of residential units impacted; the measures being taken to ensure that An Bord Pleanála will have increased capacity to make decisions; when he expects the delays will end; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50750/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Under section 126 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, An Bord Pleanála (the Board) has a statutory objective to determine appeals within 18 weeks. During the period

January to October 2017, the Board disposed of 1,763 cases. The breakdown of these cases is as follows:

Cases Disposed	Number disposed in 2017 as of end October 2017	Number disposed in Statutory Objective Period	% Disposed in Statutory Objective Period	Number disposed outside Statutory Objective Period	% Disposed outside Statutory Objective Period
All cases	1,763	1,189	67%	574	33%
Housing Schemes involving 30+ units	77	42	55%	35	45%

In relation to the cases disposed outside the statutory objective period, the number of housing units involved was 2,685, which included 3 proposed student accommodation cases involving 622 bed spaces.

Earlier this year, five new members were appointed to the Board replacing outgoing members; the five new appointees took up office during the period June to September 2017. While this change-over resulted in a temporary reduction in Board capacity for a period in mid-2017, the Board has now been restored to its previous complement of nine members and it is anticipated that the impacts of the temporary reduced capacity will be resolved in the months ahead.

In relation to housing developments specifically, the Planning and Development (Housing) and Residential Tenancies Act 2016 provides for new streamlined arrangements to enable planning applications for strategic housing developments, of 100 housing units or more or student accommodation developments of 200 bed spaces or more, to be made directly to the Board for determination within a period of 16 weeks.

With regard to resourcing the Board to support the new arrangements, a new Strategic Housing Division has been established, involving the recruitment of an additional 10 staff members to work solely on strategic housing developments. I am also considering exercising my powers under the Planning Acts to appoint two additional Board members to ensure sufficient capacity within the Board, when strategic housing development applications are referred to Board level for final determination.

Vacant Properties Data

537. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if the number of vacant homes is related to the ongoing backlog in the Probate Office; the data in regard to the number of homes affected in this way; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50815/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): As part of their remit under Census 2016, the Census enumerators employed by the Central Statistics Office were mandated to ascertain the number of vacant residential homes in their assigned areas on the Census night of 24 April 2016 and, where possible, to ascertain the reasons for such dwellings being vacant and unoccupied.

Of the 183,312 dwellings identified as vacant on the Census night (excluding holiday homes), reasons for vacancy were captured and summarised in respect of 57,246 properties,

with the enumerators being unable to provide information on the reasons for vacancy in respect of the remaining 124,595 dwellings.

In relation to the 57,246 vacant dwellings for which reasons for vacancy were indicated by enumerators, the most common reasons indicated were that the dwelling was for sale (10,948), vacant between lettings (10,350), vacant on a long-term basis (10,056 with no further information provided), and the property owner was deceased (9,193). Of the vacant properties where the enumerators indicated that the reason for vacancy was due to the property owner being deceased, it was not possible to ascertain if the property was the subject of any processing delays in the Probate Office.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that the levels of vacancy recorded as part of Census 2016 have significantly reduced in the interim, particularly in urban areas where many habitable homes and buildings have since been occupied.

Housing Data

538. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government further to Parliamentary Question No. 618 of 21 November 2017, the provision of funds for land acquisition, by local authority; the funds used directly in relation to structures in separate tables, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50820/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I refer to the reply to Question No. 618 of 21 November 2017, which set out the funding provided for the provision of social housing by local authorities and approved housing bodies over the period 2007 to 2017.

In respect of the provision of funding by my Department for land acquisition, the land costs associated with the delivery of social housing construction projects are encompassed within each individual project's overall budgetary cost. My Department recoups the cost of the land to the local authority once the land in question is utilised for the purposes of a social housing construction project.

The data in respect of funding for land costs for each social housing construction project on a local authority basis over the period 2007 to 2017 is not readily available and its extraction would involve a disproportionate amount of time and work.

However, it should be noted that an approximation of the average land cost per unit of social housing delivered can be established through a comparison of average construction costs per unit and all-in costs per unit. Assuming a weighted average mix of 1, 2, 3 and 4 bed units, the average construction cost per unit would be €160,500 approximately, while the average all-in cost per unit would be approximately €202,000. However, it should be noted that while land costs account for the majority of the difference between the construction and all-in costs figures, the latter also includes other costs such as design team fees, utilities, site investigations, surveys etc.

Question No. 539 answered with Question No. 535.

Social and Affordable Housing

540. **Deputy Michael Lowry** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government when he will announce details of the new affordable housing scheme; and if he will make

a statement on the matter. [50851/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I refer to the reply to Questions Nos. 611, 627 and 629 of 21 November 2017 which sets out the position in relation to this matter.

Building Energy Rating Administration

541. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of residential houses in each category of the BER rating system. [50959/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Damien English): The Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI), which comes under the auspices of my colleague, the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment, is the statutory agency responsible for the implementation and management of the Building Energy Rating (BER) Scheme, in accordance with Ireland's obligations under the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (Recast). In accordance with these Regulations every new building is required to have a BER Certificate since 1 January 2007 and furthermore any existing dwelling, offered for sale or letting on or after 1 January 2009, also requires a Building Energy Rating (BER) certificate.

My Department does not collate data on BER statistics. However, information, reporting and statistics in relation to the administration of the BER scheme is available on the SEAI website at www.sei.ie/resources/publications/Domestic-BER-Statistics.pdf.

Furthermore, the SEAI also provides BER statistics to the Central Statistics Office (CSO) which, in turn, publishes comprehensive quarterly bulletins which provide a detailed breakdown of BER ratings. This information is available on the CSO website at www.cso.ie/en/statistics/environment/.

Wind Energy Guidelines

542. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the status of the wind planning guidelines; the status of the strategic environment assessment on these guidelines; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50961/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): 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.

As part of the overall review, a strategic environmental assessment (SEA) will be undertaken on the "proposed draft approach" to the revised Guidelines before they come into effect. This is in accordance with the requirements of EU Directive 2001/24/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment, the SEA Directive. SEA is a process by which environmental considerations are required to be fully integrated into the preparation of plans and programmes which act as frameworks for development consent, prior to their final adoption, with public consultation as part of that process. It is envisaged that the

public consultation as part of the SEA process will be undertaken in early 2018.

When finalised, the revised Guidelines will be issued under Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. Planning authorities, and, where applicable, An Bord Pleanála must have regard to guidelines issued under Section 28 in the performance of their functions generally under the Planning Acts.

Tenant Purchase Scheme Review

543. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the reason the income of an elderly person is taken into consideration when the discount under the tenant purchase scheme is being calculated in view of the fact that this person cannot purchase the house in their own right; the timeframe for when the report on the review of the tenant purchase scheme will be released; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51168/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The Tenant (Incremental) Purchase Scheme came into operation on 1 January 2016. The Scheme is open to eligible tenants, including joint tenants, of local authority houses that are available for sale under the Scheme. To be eligible, tenants must meet certain criteria, including having a minimum reckonable income of €15,000 per annum and having been in receipt of social housing support for at least one year.

The minimum reckonable income for eligibility under the scheme is determined by the relevant housing authority in accordance with the detailed provisions of the Ministerial Direction issued under Sections 24(3) and (4) of the 2014 Act. In the determination of the minimum reckonable income, housing authorities can include income from a number of different sources and classes, such as from employment, private pensions, maintenance payments and certain social welfare payments, including pensions, where the social welfare payment is secondary to employment income. In determining reckonable income, the income of all tenants of the house, including adult children that are joint tenants is included, as is the income of the spouse, civil partner or other partner/co-habitant of a tenant who lives in the house with them, thus ensuring the appropriate level of discount is applied to the purchase price.

In order to ensure the sustainability of the scheme, it is essential that an applicant's income is of a long-term and sustainable nature. This is necessary to ensure that the tenant purchasing the house is in a financial position, as the owner, to maintain and insure the property for the duration of the charged period, in compliance with the conditions of the order transferring the ownership of, and responsibility for, the house from the local authority to the tenant.

The terms of the Scheme involve discounts of 40%, 50% or 60% off the purchase price of the house, linked to the tenant's reckonable annual income. On the sale of a house under the Scheme, the local authority will place an incremental purchase charge on the house equivalent to the discount granted to the tenant. Generally, the charge withers away over a period of 20, 25 or 30 years depending on the level of discount involved, as set out in the following table.

Reckonable Annual Income	Discount	Charge period
Between €15,000 and €20,000	60%	30 years
Between €20,001 and €29,999	50%	25 years

Reckonable Annual Income	Discount	Charge period
€30,000 or more	40%	20 years

In line with the commitment given in the Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness, a review of the first 12 months of the Tenant Purchase Scheme's operation has been undertaken. The review has incorporated analysis of comprehensive data received from local authorities regarding the operation of the scheme during 2016 and a wide-ranging public consultation process which saw submissions received from individuals, elected representatives and organisations.

The review is now complete and a full report setting out findings and recommendations has been prepared. I expect to be in a position to publish the outcome of the review shortly.

Irish Water

544. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the status of a contract (details supplied) in view of recent statements from Irish Water; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51176/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Since 1 January 2014, Irish Water has statutory responsibility for all aspects of water services planning, delivery and operation at national, regional and local levels. The Water Services Strategic Plan - A Plan for the Future of Water Services (WSSP), which was published in October 2015, set out strategic objectives for the delivery of water services for 25 years up to 2040. The WSSP committed to the preparation of Business Plans by Irish Water to set out targets for delivery of efficiencies in operational and capital expenditure and performance targets consistent with the delivery of the objectives of the WSSP.

The Irish Water Business Plan - Transforming Water Services in Ireland to 2021 was published in late 2015. It set the priorities for the utility to 2021 and underpins the transformation plan for the water sector to a single utility model. The plan was considered by Government and was approved subject to budgetary and regulatory review. The Water Services Act 2017 contains provisions for the establishment of a Water Advisory Body (WAB). The WAB is being established to advise on measures needed to improve the transparency and accountability of Irish Water. The body will report on a quarterly basis to an Oireachtas Committee on the performance of Irish Water on the implementation of its business plan.

The Confidence and Supply Arrangement in support of the minority Government has confirmed the retention of Irish Water as a single national utility in public ownership, responsible for the delivery of water and waste water services.

Since 2013, working through Service Level Agreements (SLAs) with the local authorities, Irish Water has made significant progress in establishing the utility capability, which has included investing over €2 billion in the system to date. Over the past year, significant design phase work has been undertaken on the development of a transformation plan, in line with the Business Plan objectives. Flowing from this, I have been informed by Ervia (which has responsibility for Irish Water), that they consider that the public water system will benefit significantly by greater integration of operations into the single utility. Consequently, the Ervia Board has agreed in principle not to renew the SLAs beyond 2025 when they are due to end, and to move to a full integrated public utility operations model. The Water Services Acts already provide the necessary protections for terms and conditions, and pensions, of local authority staff working

under the SLAs in such circumstances. It is the intention of Ervia to work with local authorities to manage this change within the life of the current Business Plan (i.e. by end of 2021).

A process of engagement with local authorities on the proposed next steps on the transformation plan has now commenced. The SLAs between Irish Water and local authorities have not been amended and remain in place until such time as an alternative is agreed.

Social and Affordable Housing Data

545. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the social housing delivered under each of the categories (details supplied) by local authority, in each of the years 2011 to 2016 and to date in 2017, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51242/17]

546. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the social housing targets committed to in Rebuilding Ireland under each of the categories (details supplied), by local authority for each of the years over the next five years, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [51243/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I propose to take Questions Nos. 545 and 546 together.

The Government's Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness provides for the delivery of 50,000 social housing homes out to 2021. This ambitious target is supported by funding of over €6 billion. This will be achieved using a range of delivery mechanisms including build, remediation, acquisition and leasing.

Details in relation to housing purchased and built in all local authority areas are available on my Department's website at the following link: <http://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/social-housing/social-and-affordable/overall-social-housing-provision>. Information on quarter three of 2017 is currently being finalised and will be published shortly.

Details in relation to the Social Housing Current Expenditure Programme (SHCEP) for 2014 and 2015 are set out in Tables 1 and 2. Data for 2016 is available on the website at the link above. Information for 2011 to 2013 is only available on a cumulative basis and is on the website, with data for 2017 to be published shortly.

The Voids Programme was introduced in 2014 and has seen over 7,000 social homes remediated and relet from 2014-16. Breakdowns by each local authority are set out in Table 3. I anticipate that over 1,400 units will be remediated under the Programme in 2017.

The targets under Rebuilding Ireland are to 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. Table 4 sets out the targets under the main programme areas for each year of Rebuilding Ireland.

In terms of the specific categories of delivery referred to by the Deputy, Table 5 shows the elements of the build activity of almost 33,500 social homes targeted under Rebuilding Ireland, including homes that will be built directly by local authorities and AHBs, properties constructed for social housing through Part V and refurbished properties/Voids, together with some 6,500 acquisitions, over the period 2016 to 2021.

I will shortly be issuing new targets for social housing delivery to each local authority for

the period to 2021 in line with the Rebuilding Ireland national targets.

Table 1: SHCEP Output 2014

Local Authority	SHCEP 2014 Output	SHCEP 2014 Build	SHCEP 2014 Acquisition	SHCEP 2014 Lease
Carlow	56	0	53	3
Cavan	2	0	0	2
Clare	38	0	26	12
Cork City	12	8	0	4
Cork County	108	0	6	102
Donegal	20	0	0	20
Dublin City	122	0	58	64
Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown	0	0	0	0
Fingal	58	0	6	52
South Dublin	183	8	81	94
Galway City	22	0	0	22
Galway County	12	0	8	4
Kerry	26	0	0	26
Kildare	35	0	9	26
Kilkenny	37	0	37	0
Laois	14	0	0	14
Leitrim	0	0	0	0
Limerick	14	0	11	3
Longford	3	0	0	3
Louth	71	0	4	67
Mayo	45	0	0	45
Meath	6	0	0	6
Monaghan	0	0	0	0
Offaly	67	0	0	67
Roscommon	0	0	0	0
Sligo	2	0	0	2
Tipperary	37	0	0	37
Waterford	18	0	4	14
Westmeath	51	0	0	51
Wexford	3	0	0	3
Wicklow	3	0	0	3
Total	1065	16	303	746

Table 2: SHCEP Output 2015

Local Authority	SHCEP 2015 Output	SHCEP 2015 Build	SHCEP 2015 Acquisition	SHCEP 2015 Lease
Carlow	31	0	0	31
Cavan	3	0	0	3
Clare	42	0	1	41
Cork City	65	0	26	39

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Local Authority	SHCEP 2015 Output	SHCEP 2015 Build	SHCEP 2015 Acquisition	SHCEP 2015 Lease
Cork County	175	0	60	115
Donegal	37	0	5	32
Dublin City	258	26	47	185
Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown	10	0	10	0
Fingal	49	0	4	45
South Dublin	202	0	82	120
Galway City	55	0	30	25
Galway County	44	0	14	30
Kerry	51	0	0	51
Kildare	30	0	0	30
Kilkenny	43	0	0	43
Laois	13	0	1	12
Leitrim	5	0	0	5
Limerick	0	0	0	0
Longford	31	0	0	31
Louth	36	17	5	14
Mayo	31	0	0	31
Meath	55	0	13	42
Monaghan	4	0	0	4
Offaly	61	0	4	57
Roscommon	0	0	0	0
Sligo	6	0	0	6
Tipperary	31	0	0	31
Waterford	14	0	1	13
Westmeath	39	0	0	39
Wexford	49	0	28	21
Wicklow	7	0	0	7
Total	1477	43	331	1103

Table 3: Voids Programme 2014-2017

Local Authority	Units returned 2014	Units Returned 2015	Units Returned 2016	Unit Allocation 2017
Carlow	42	28	8	8
Cavan	23	28	32	12
Clare	65	96	79	24
Cork City	212	281	151	43
Cork County	155	199	97	69
DLR	5	24	19	11
Donegal	167	146	83	128
Dublin City	467	787	531	377
Fingal	165	139	147	151
Galway City	26	25	28	16

Local Authority	Units returned 2014	Units Returned 2015	Units Returned 2016	Unit Allocation 2017
Galway County	76	59	37	30
Kerry	79	103	90	56
Kildare	49	20	24	7
Kilkenny	25	23	11	9
Laois	43	12	12	5
Leitrim	15	9	47	16
Limerick	98	52	18	32
Longford	16	22	23	37
Louth	9	21	8	7
Mayo	80	86	25	22
Meath	59	54	65	47
Monaghan	21	13	40	13
Offaly	35	55	41	7
Roscommon	34	36	72	4
Sligo	29	39	68	44
South Dublin	92	27	81	92
Tipperary	86	115	100	58
Waterford	42	56	83	52
Westmeath	56	74	43	8
Wexford	20	24	17	11
Wicklow	35	43	10	9

Table 4: Social Housing Targets 2016-2021

Year		Build	Acquisition	Leasing	RAS	HAP
2016	Target	2,260	1,755	225	1,000	12,000
2016	Delivered	2,965	1,957	792	1,256	12,075
2017	Target	3,200	1,250	600	1,000	15,000
2018	Target	4,969	900	2,000	600	17,000
2019	Target	6,385	1,025	2,130	600	16,760
2020	Target	7,716	800	2,631	600	13,000
2021	Target	8,907	800	2,450	-	10,000

Table 5: Build and Acquisition National Targets 2016-2021

Delivery	Build	Acquisition
Local Authority	16,328	1,480
AHB	8,960	5,050
Refurbished properties/ Voids	3,459	-
Properties constructed for social housing through Part V	4,690	-
Totals	33,437	6,530

Naval Service

547. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the costs incurred by the Naval Service in participating in high speed boarding trials with a company (details supplied) as reported in the media; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50854/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The 2015 White Paper on Defence reaffirms that my Department will “identify opportunities for cooperative-collaborative engagement between the Defence Forces and Irish based enterprise and research institutes, including third level colleges.” The sea trials referred to by the Deputy were conducted as part of routine Naval Service patrols and I am advised that no additional costs were incurred.

Air Corps

548. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the full year savings achieved by the abolition of the service commitment incentive scheme for Air Corps personnel. [50903/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): A service commitment scheme was introduced in 1997 to incentivise pilots to remain within the Air Corps. This scheme ran in various formats until 2010 when it was discontinued. Payment under this scheme between 2002 and 2010 amounted to just over €5 million. No provision has been made within budgetary arrangements since 2010 for a similar type scheme.

Defence Forces Strength

549. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the number of persons serving in the Permanent Defence Force; and the estimated full year cost of increasing the numbers to 9,500, 10,000, 10,500, 11,000 and 11,500, respectively. [51160/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The White Paper on Defence (2015) sets out Government policy on Defence for the next decade. It commits to retaining flexible and adaptable defence capabilities for a broad range of scenarios and sets out capability requirements including personnel and equipment in this regard. In this context, it is important that an appropriate balance is maintained between personnel costs and equipment investment.

The White Paper provides for a Permanent Defence Force Establishment of 9,500 personnel and as at 31st October 2017 (the latest date for which figures are available) the strength of the PDF was 9,219 personnel. The Defence Budget for 2017 provides for a full strength of 9,500 personnel and every effort is being made to reach this strength. With regard to equipment and infrastructure, I was pleased to have recently secured additional capital funding of €98 million over the balance of the timeframe for the Capital Investment Programme 2016–2021 which will contribute to meeting equipment and infrastructure requirements.

Apart from the White Paper targets, the Department does not maintain costings for increasing the strength of the PDF to those outlined by the Deputy. This would require detailed consideration of the capability requirements underpinning such an increase and consideration of associated personnel issues, including organisational structures as well as equipment, infrastructure and other additional requirements and associated costs.

Defence Forces Reserve Strength

550. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the number of persons serving in the Reserve Defence Force; and the estimated full year cost of increasing the numbers to 3,000, 3,500, 4,000, 4,500, 5,000 and to 5,500, respectively. [51161/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The White Paper on Defence sets out a developmental path for the Reserve Defence Force (RDF). It provides that the overarching establishment of the Army Reserve (AR) and Naval Service Reserve (NSR) will be 4,169 personnel, consisting of 3,869 Army Reservists and the expansion of the establishment of the four NSR Units from currently 200 personnel to 300.

The current total strength for the Reserve Defence Force is 1,856 effective personnel and subhead A5 provides for a budget €2.115 million for paid training and it is estimated that the costs of reaching the full strength would require an additional paid training budget of approximately €2.5 million.

Providing for numbers beyond the current establishment would require consideration of the capability requirements underpinning such an increase and an assessment of the associated cost implications. The Department does not retain such costings.

Defence Forces Personnel

551. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the reason, if RACO and PDFORRA are signatories to the current C and A agreement and in cases in which amendments or changes require agreement of the parties, he excluded these key stakeholders from the review working group of the Defence Forces conciliation and arbitration scheme. [51240/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): I announced previously my intention to review the Conciliation and Arbitration Scheme for members of the Permanent Defence Force. In advance of the commencement of the review, I arranged for draft terms of reference to be circulated to PDFORRA and RACO. During the course of recent meetings I had with the Permanent Defence Force representative associations, I requested that they revert to me with their comments on the draft terms of reference, which I would duly consider.

I have received the views of both associations and am considering their suggestions. As the draft terms of reference are not finalised, it would be premature to comment on the make-up of any working group.

Defence Forces Strength

552. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the reason his Department has failed to conduct a review of unit manning levels to include examination of unit

personnel capacity of duty rosters in view of the fact that he has been continually informed by representative associations of the indisputable inadequate and dangerous manning levels that are compromising the safety and well being of personnel. [51241/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The White Paper on Defence sets out that the establishment of the Permanent Defence Force will be maintained at 9,500 personnel. As at end October 2017 the strength is 9,219 personnel, which is 97% of the establishment. A range of measures are in train to reach the intended strength level and there is sufficient funding in the Defence Vote for a full strength PDF.

I am aware that the Representative Associations have recently raised concerns regarding Unit manning levels. The Chief of Staff has assured me that within the Defence Forces there is appropriate governance and oversight to assess, to mitigate and ensure that in every action that is undertaken the health and safety of all personnel is paramount. The health and welfare of the men and women of the Defence Forces are a priority for me and I will continue to seek updates on this important matter.

As part of the implementation of the White Paper a range of projects are under way which are examining capability requirements across the Defence Forces. I have directed that a project to examine skills gaps is brought forward and this will commence as part of the next tranche of White Paper projects.