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 10, inclusive, answered orally.

Questions Nos. 11 to 21, inclusive, resubmitted.

Questions Nos. 22 to 34, inclusive, answered orally.

Affordable Childcare Scheme Implementation

35. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the status of the implementation of the affordable childcare scheme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18897/18]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** I am pleased to present a positive update on progress with the scheme. There is much work to be done, but we have made good progress.

Officials from my Department, along with colleagues in Pobal, have been working hard to develop the legal, technical and administrative infrastructure for the new Affordable Childcare Scheme. This scheme will provide financial support for parents, establish a sustainable platform for investment in the childcare sector for decades to come and, crucially, allow us to continue to invest in giving our children the best start in life.

Before Christmas the Childcare Support Bill 2017, the legal framework for the scheme, was published. It passed all stages in the Dáil in the first quarter of this year. I was very pleased with the positive, cross party support it received and I want to thank Deputies again for their valuable input which strengthened the legislation. The Bill has now completed Second Stage in the Seanad and will commence Committee Stage this Thursday.

Alongside the Childcare Support Bill, intensive work is ongoing on the drafting of supporting regulations for the scheme and on regulations to provide, for the first time, for the registration of school-age childcare providers. The latter regulations will ensure that all school-age childcare services are registered with Tusla prior to the introduction of the Affordable Childcare Scheme and can participate in the scheme from the outset.

With regard to the scheme’s supporting IT infrastructure, good progress is also being made. In January I published a Request for Tenders for the development of a new IT system and received these at the end of March. They are now being evaluated in line with strict procurement rules, and I anticipate finalisation of the process very shortly. The introduction of the scheme is dependent on this new IT system. As soon as a contract is awarded to a successful bidder and a timeframe agreed for the completion of the system, I hope to be in a position to confirm and
communicate an official launch date for the Scheme.

I have often emphasised that we need to take the time to put a rigorous, carefully planned IT system in place. We are continuing this process and making good progress. It is vital to an effective, user-friendly scheme for parents and providers, and I want to get it right.

The ACS is an ambitious project, which my Department is working on intensively. I will be happy to keep the Deputy, and this House, informed of developments as we move ahead.

*Question No. 36 answered with Question No. 34.*

**Child and Family Agency Staff**

37. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs her plans with regard to recruiting more social workers. [18786/18]

38. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of social work vacancies in Tusla by title; the number of children classified as high priority awaiting allocation of a social worker; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18546/18]

45. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the work she is undertaking alongside Tusla to address staff recruitment and retention issues; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18545/18]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 37, 38 and 45 together.

I acknowledge that the recruitment and retention of social workers is one of the biggest challenges for Tusla with only 200-250 graduating per year in a very competitive labour market.

Working in child protection is one of the most difficult areas, and I fully appreciate the dedication of all professionals in Tusla who undertake this extremely important task.

I am fully supportive of Tusla’s proactive approach to recruiting, supporting and retaining staff across all grades. In support of this I have provided for a significant increase in Tusla’s funding allocation with an increase of €40.6m in 2018 and a total increase of €144m since its establishment in 2014.

Given this level of funding, Tusla expects to increase its total workforce by approximately 422 resulting in a total workforce of 4118 whole time equivalents (WTE) by the end of 2018.

Also, given the current limited availability of social work graduates, Tusla expects at least 45 of these staff to be additional social workers. There will also be proactive recruitment of grades such as social care and clerical administration staff to support social workers to ensure that they can focus on their core tasks.

To support Tusla’s ambitious recruitment targets it launched its 2018 graduate recruitment campaign last September. This campaign is currently open for applications with interviews expected to commence in May/June 2018.

The campaign included Northern Ireland and Scotland. Continuing *Tusla Recruit*’s proactive approach of previous years all campuses were visited and over 200 students registered their interest. *Tusla Recruit* maintains on-going communications with the registered students and
partners them through the application and CORU registration process with a view to making Tusla an employer of choice.

Tusla also has an on-going rolling campaign to attract existing social workers who have a particular interest in working in child protection. This campaign is also designed to appeal to social workers who may currently be living abroad and wish to move to Ireland.

I have also asked Tusla to develop a Multi-annual Strategic Workforce Plan to identify the future composition of Tusla’s workforce so as to deliver on Tusla’s priorities. I expect the Plan to encompass a range of activities aimed at addressing Tusla’s short, medium and long term needs and to manage the current challenges Tusla faces recruiting social workers.

The Plan will also form the basis of engaging with key stakeholders such as the education sector to ensure a sustainable supply of social workers in the future.

With regard to current vacancies, Tusla advises that 207 social work posts are at various stages of the recruitment process.

Of the 207 posts:
- 26 are Senior Social Work Practitioner;
- 15 are Principal Social Worker;
- 17 are Social Worker - Team Leader and
- 149 are Social Worker.

Tusla publish their Performance and Activity data on a monthly basis and I can inform you that as of the end of February 2018 there were 4,756 cases awaiting allocation to a social worker, out of 24,366 open cases.

Of the total number of unallocated cases, 898 were categorised as High Priority. An unallocated case relates to a case about a child that is deemed to need a social work assessment, but has not yet been allocated to a social worker.

It is important to note that all urgent and emergency cases receive immediate attention by the local duty social work team. The majority of unallocated cases are new referrals. However, they may also include children living with their families who had an allocated social worker, or to a child in care, where there may be a social work vacancy.

Tusla is working hard to maintain and improve its retention rate. In March 2018 it had a total staff turnover rate of 5.6%. The current social worker turnover rate is 8.1% compared to 9.4% in March 2017. A low turnover rate is clearly in the interest of vulnerable children and families and it is also more efficient for the organisation as a whole.

Tusla values its staff and in acknowledgement of this it has established a Retention Steering Group to plan and implement an integrated approach to retention throughout the organisation. Tusla’s Health, Wellbeing and Employee Assistance Programme has a range of services available to staff. The Programme has completed a staff survey on retention and its findings will inform part of a new Strategy on Retention for Tusla.

Tusla is also placing an increased focus on well-being by actively encouraging employees to adopt behaviours that will improve their life and improve workforce morale.

Furthermore as part of its retention strategy, Tusla has also implemented an extensive Con-
Continuous Professional Development Strategy in recent years. The strategy commits all social workers to having a minimum of 21 hours for personal development plans and 10 hours for engaging in continuous profession development.

Tusla has also introduced a National Transfer Policy to facilitate staff wishing to relocate to another part of the country within Tusla’s services while ensuring that the Agency retains their valuable expertise.

Other supports for Tusla staff include rehabilitation services to support staff that are out of work due to injury or illness and a Critical Incident Stress Management Team to support teams and individuals in the event of any traumatic event.

Child Care Services Provision

39. **Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if the childcare needs in the zero to two years of age group will be addressed in Dublin 1 in view of the concerns of public health nurses. [18607/18]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** I understand the Deputy is referring to issues around childcare supports in Dublin 1, particularly for lone parents and parents wishing to return to education.

I am aware of issues relating to the availability of early years places in that area and officials from my Department are in fact scheduled to meet with stakeholders this week to discuss them.

Dublin City Childcare Committee, which is funded by my Department, is also available to parents and childcare providers who may require assistance regarding capacity issues and access to various programmes offered by my Department.

My Department operates a number of childcare programmes which may be of assistance to families of very young children in the area.

Targeted programmes include:

The Community Childcare Subvention (CCS) which provides support for parents on low income to avail of reduced childcare costs at participating community childcare services. Eligible children can only be registered during a snapshot period and can avail of up to €145 per week.

The Community Childcare Subvention Plus (CCSP) does likewise but is available from privately owned childcare services also, and eligible children can be registered at any time during the year.

The Training and Employment Childcare (TEC) Programmes support parents on eligible training courses, as well as categories of parents returning to work.

In September 2017, I introduced a new universal subsidy, which is available for all children aged between 6 months and 3 years of age in registered childcare. This amounts to €1040 per annum.

The provision of childcare services for children under 2 poses extra demands for providers in that, for example, they require higher staff ratios.

I continue to seek to support providers in this regard and build additional capacity nationally.
via a number of initiatives. These include higher subsidy levels under the forthcoming Affordable Childcare Scheme, and capital grants in 2018 to build extra capacity for this age group.

Children and Family Services Provision

40. Deputy Catherine Connolly asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if the terms of reference have been drawn up for a working group (details supplied); if so, if she will provide a copy of same; the members of the working group; the number of times it has met; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18899/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I am committed to supporting and promoting the development, welfare and protection of children, and to help families be the best that they can be.

I want to see every child maintaining positive contact with both of their parents, whatever their circumstances. For some children, it is in their interest that this contact happens in a supervised, neutral, child friendly venue.

The evaluation report on Family Child Contact Centres, to which the Deputy refers, recommended an integrated response by my Department and the Department of Justice and Equality. It is my belief that this is the best approach to progress the recommendations.

I am pleased to advise that officials from my Department have come together with colleagues in the Department of Justice and Equality to jointly look at the implementation of the recommendations of the report.

It was agreed that my Department will draft the Terms of Reference for the Working Group, in consultation with the Department of Justice and Equality. We expect to advance this matter shortly.

In preparation for the work of the Group, officials in my Department have carried out a scoping exercise to establish both the demand for these services, and also the current provision of family contact services.

To date this has included:

- a review of evaluations and recommendations relating to family contact services;
- a comparison of the family contact services available internationally;
- a review of the services currently offered at Family Resource Centres;
- the collation of information from other service providers; and
- consultation with individuals who are/have been working directly in family contact services.

I am confident that the inter-departmental group is the best approach to look at how a family contact centre service will work for families in this country.

As I said at my recent meeting with Time4Us, a Galway organisation providing family contact services, the group has the potential to develop a robust model which could be used by many other services.
41. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the expenditure by her Department on the Tuam mother and baby home inquiry, in particular, for advertising, the appointment of consultants, collaborative forum and or other ancillary matters excluding the commission set up in accordance with the Commissions of Investigation Act 2004; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18898/18]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** The costs incurred to date by my Department in relation to the specific categories of expenditure identified by the Deputy are collated in the following table.

The expenditure on consultancy relates to the costs incurred by the expert technical group in providing advices on the options for the future of the Tuam site.

The Collaborative Forum is in the process of being established so the costs incurred to date relate to the initial work of the selection panel.

These figures do not include expenditure incurred directly by the Mother and Baby Homes Commission of Investigation in the course of its independent investigations.

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**Mental Health Services Provision**

42. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the position regarding the working group tasked with streamlining children’s mental health services; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18544/18]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** I am pleased to say that the Working Group referred to by the Deputy held its inaugural meeting on 19th January 2018. The group is co-chaired by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and the Department of Health.

The group is made up of senior officials from both Departments with representatives from Tusla, the Child and Family Agency and the Health Service Executive.

The key objective of the working group is to examine psychological and mental health services for children and young people with the aim of agreeing a clear continuum of provision and strengthening alignment between providers.

These services must be centered on the needs of children and young people. The working group has agreed the Terms of Reference and are focusing on assessing work and policies in place with a view to identifying key actions to be progressed and improvements to be made.

Work is also being advanced to secure a solid overview of levels of provision and availability of services, but we would all accept that there is a good deal more work to do to achieve a well coordinated, integrated service that meets the needs of children and young people.

I am pleased that this collaborative working group has now commenced its work to address
these and related matters. Our aim is that the group would finalise an agreed approach by the middle of this year and commence implementation from Quarter 3 onwards.

**Child Care Services Funding**

43. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs her plans to assist parents burdened with high childcare costs in view of the fact that the subsidy for childcare introduced in September 2017 was unsuccessful in the sense that many creches raised prices in conjunction with the scheme; and if the new version of the affordable childcare plan will be in place by September 2018. [18605/18]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** The Pobal annual survey on childcare conducted on behalf of my Department provides extensive and very useful data on childcare fees. This survey showed that the average cost of childcare in Ireland rose by 4% or €7 per week last year, which is well below the €20 per week on offer through the newly introduced universal subsidy and significantly lower than the €145 per week, per child, subventions to families most in need. Fees for part-time childcare actually showed a slight reduction.

On becoming Minister for Children and Youth Affairs I committed to improving the accessibility, affordability and quality of childcare in Ireland and although there is much yet to be achieved, I am happy with significant progress made on these fronts over the past year.

The universal subsidy, worth up to €1,040 per year for children under three in registered childcare is now being availed of by 35,588 children. Targeted supports for lower income families are being availed of by 38,680 children. My Department has exceeded our target of a total of 70,000 children by 4,268 and these numbers will continue to rise until the end of the program year.

Notwithstanding this, I understand that any rise in childcare fees is a very significant matter for families and that childcare fees continue to represent far too high a proportion of family income. The new subsidies introduced last September will remain in place until we complete the development of the new Affordable Childcare Scheme which, as I have briefed Deputies on previously, should be introduced in 2019. This scheme will mark a major milestone in making childcare more affordable.

I remain strongly committed to continuing to make childcare more affordable for families whilst at the same time supporting the early years workforce to provide a high quality service.

**Child Protection Guidelines**

44. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the discussions she has had with an organisation (details supplied); if she has received a copy of the Elliott report; and her plans to ensure good governance and probity within the organisation. [18783/18]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** I met with Scouting Ireland on Thursday 19 April to provide the organisation with an opportunity to clarify the revelations highlighted in the media coverage which have raises reputational questions for the organisation.

I was informed at that meeting of the organisation’s plans to reform the governance of the organisation and to put new structures in place. Scouting Ireland also confirmed their
commitment to implement the recommendations in relation to safeguarding and to carry out a full review of historic cases. The Garda vetting of the individual referred to in recent media reports is in progress. The leadership of Scouting Ireland informed me that the organisation was involved in a governance process and reforms in the way they do their work in particular at board level. These reforms will be discussed at a special meeting of the membership in June and October.

Scouting Ireland commissioned Mr Ian Elliott to carry out a review into the organisation’s handling of an allegation of a serious sexual assault on an adult volunteer by another adult volunteer. While this alleged assault took place in 2009 it was only reported within the organisation in 2016. Mr Elliott’s report into this case resulted in Scouting Ireland engaging a barrister to conduct a full investigation into this allegation, particularly with regard to the handling of the matter by certain senior volunteers. I will be receiving both reports be submitted to me once this investigation is completed.

There are a number of steps to be taken before I can be assured that Scouting Ireland has the proper governance arrangements in place which will allow me to restore funding.

I have asked Jillian van Turnhout, as an independent expert, to examine the situation over the coming weeks. In accordance with her Terms of Reference she is being asked to provide me with a clear assessment of Scouting Ireland’s governance arrangements and to advise me on whether I can be assured about Scouting Ireland’s governance and related matters. This will be an important factor for me in determining whether I can resume funding of the organisation.

*Question No. 45 answered with Question No. 37.*

**Child Protection**

46. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if her attention has been drawn to a recent article and documentary detailing the alleged mishandling of disclosures of serious abuse at a service (details supplied); the measures being taken by her Department in relation to staff and board members for allegedly misleading investigators and victims; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18894/18]

57. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if her Department has had engagement with a service (details supplied) in view of alleged mishandling of disclosures of abuse detailed in a recent article and documentary; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18895/18]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 46 and 57 together.

Officials from my Department have been in contact with this organisation in relation to the allegations made. They were informed that the organisation carried out its own internal investigation into handling of the allegation of serious abuse and determined that the complainant had not reported the alleged abuse to any member of staff at the time the alleged incident occurred.

Officials were also informed that Tusla has reviewed the Child Protection and Safeguarding policies and practices in place within the organisation and deemed that young people’s safety is protected. The organisation has informed my Department that the Ombudsman for Children has also completed an examination of the complaint and was satisfied that the organisation acted reasonably towards the complainant.
The organisation is obliged to adhere to the requirements of the recently enacted provisions of the Children First Act 2015 and has provided written confirmation to my Department that the requisite Child Safeguarding Statement and risk assessment is completed.

I have asked my officials to seek a written report on this matter from the organisation concerned.

**Child Protection**

47. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she is satisfied that each voluntary organisation in receipt of funding from her Department is meeting child protection requirements; her views on whether sufficient steps are being taken to ensure that this is the case; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18800/18]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** The Children First Act 2015 places a number of statutory obligations on organisations providing relevant services to children. These obligations include: a requirement to keep children safe from harm while they are availing of the service; a requirement to carry out a risk assessment, and, a requirement to prepare a child safeguarding statement which sets out the policies and procedures which are in place to mitigate these risks.

The obligations of all Government Departments, including my own, regarding the oversight of bodies which provide a relevant service and which are funded by Departments are set out in section 27 of the Children First Act.

Section 27 requires each Government Department to prepare and publish a Sectorial Implementation Plan that outlines the programme of measures to be taken to ensure that the Department, and any body that provides a relevant service and receives funding from that Department, complies with the provisions of the Act.

The Sectorial Implementation Plan for my Department, which was published in March 2018, is available on [www.dcya.gov.ie](http://www.dcya.gov.ie).

Funding provided by my Department to any organisation is contingent on that organisation meeting with a range of governance requirements. This includes its commitment to, and compliance with, all legal requirements in the area of child protection as set out in the Children First Act 2015. In cases where I am not satisfied that governance requirements are being met, including those in relation to child protection, funding may be withdrawn.

**Departmental Contracts**

48. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs further to Parliamentary Question No. 12 of 22 February 2018, her plans to examine her Department’s relationship with Pobal with a view to forming a closer statutory relationship; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18842/18]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** Pobal is a not-for-profit company, which works on behalf of the Irish Government in managing programmes that contribute to social inclusion, equality and reconciliation.

Pobal operates under the aegis of Department of Rural and Community Development (DCRD). Consequently, any decisions regarding its structure or statutory relationships require
the consideration of my cabinet colleague, Minister Ring, the officials of his department, and the Pobal Board.

The services Pobal provides to my Department are managed under a multi-level governance framework, specifically service level agreements, programmes of work, and individual programme agreements, all of which are monitored closely via regular high level management meetings. My Department has no immediate plans to revise the basis for our relationship with Pobal.

As I previously stated in this chamber on the 22nd February 2018, my Department plans to conduct a review of the systems and structures which exist nationally and locally to support childcare provision in this country. This will include the role of City and County Childcare Committees, Pobal, and various National Voluntary Childcare Organisations. This review is the subject of another PQ submitted by the Deputy, PQ 18841, and that response addresses this matter also.

My Department is currently developing a 10-year, cross-Government Early Years Strategy which will include significant content relating to early years care and education and school age childcare. I plan to publish this strategy in the Autumn. It is important that the review of systems and structures takes account of the policy direction set in the strategy and hence the review will commence in tandem with publication of the Early Years Strategy.

**Early Childhood Care and Education Programmes**

49. **Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if consideration is being given to the reintroduction of three enrolment points to the early childhood care and education scheme in order to facilitate greater flexibility and accessibility to families; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18751/18]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** From September 2018, all children meeting the minimum age requirement of 2 years and 8 months will be eligible for a full two programme years on the Early Childhood Care and Education programme (ECCE). The upper age ECCE requirement is that the child must not reach 5 years and 6 months before the end of the programme year.

Some children will not be able to commence their ECCE in September 2018 as they will not have reached the age of 2 years and 8 months on or before 31st August 2018. However, they will be able to commence ECCE in September 2019, and continue for a further year from September 2020, commencing school in September 2021. Parents of children born around this time of the year may prefer for their children to start school at 4 rather than 5. These parents may therefore choose to avail of 1 year of ECCE only. However, it is important to note that this is a parental choice and that the overall policy change has ensured that two programme years are available to all children, an improvement on the system as it has operated to date.

This extension to ECCE from September 2018 refines the development introduced last year, whereby three intake dates were adopted, and will increase the duration of each registered child on ECCE from a current average of 61 weeks, to an entitlement to 76 weeks (two programme years). This enhancement delivers fully on a commitment in the Programme for a Partnership Government that is good for children, families and Early Years providers.

This new measure will also address the situation where there was a wide range in the number of preschool weeks a child could avail of – between 61 and 88 weeks – and will ensure a programme that is equitable for all children.
The number of entry points will revert to one at the beginning of the new programme year (September, 2018). One enrolment period at the start of the pre-school year will help streamline the administration process and will make it easier for childcare providers to operate and budget for the programme year. This will also make it easier for parents to secure places on the ECCE programme for their children.

At a broader level, I announced on the 6th December 2017 that I have put a pause on the decision to remove the ECCE over age exemption so that further consultation with parents of children with disabilities can occur. Until the consultation is complete, and both the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and the Department of Education and Skills have time to consider its findings, the overage exemption will continue to be available.

**Youth Services**

50. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs her views on whether the State should have a representative on the board of an organisation (details supplied) to protect the interests of taxpayers. [18785/18]

**(Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone)):** I have no plans at the present time to have a representative on the board of Scouting Ireland. Scouting Ireland is one of a number of youth organisations funded by my Department and each funded organisation must comply with strict governance standards including compliance with all legislative obligations.

My Department has a duty of care with regard to public funding and to protect the interest of taxpayers. All youth organisations in receipt of public funding are required to adhere to the public financial management principles associated with grant funding provided from the public purse. Youth organisations are notified of their obligations in this regard on receipt of their annual letters of allocation. In addition youth organisations in receipt of funding under the Youth Service Grant Scheme are subject to random verification visits from Pobal, who administer funding on behalf of my Department.

I met with Scouting Ireland on Thursday 19th April to discuss my concerns in relation to the governance of the organisation. During the course of that meeting I was informed of the organisation’s plans to reform the governance of the organisation and put new structures in place. I sincerely hope that the organisation will continue to engage effectively to address the outstanding issues relating to the standards of governance within the organisation.

**Adoption Records Provision**

51. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the steps she is taking to protect the children of illegally adopted persons who are unaware of their status from receiving false medical records in view of the delay in progressing the Adoption (Information and Tracing) Bill 2016; and the way in which these persons are being protected from receiving incorrect medical family histories. [18814/18]

**(Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone)):** The Adoption (Information and Tracing) Bill 2016 provides for the first time a statutory entitlement to identity information for adopted persons.

The legislation provides for structured and regulated access to information and tracing ser-
vices for those affected by adoption. It sets out the information that can be provided, which includes early life information and medical information, and the circumstances in which it can be provided to adopted persons. A key provision in the Bill is that an adopted person aged 18 years or over who was adopted prior to the commencement of the Bill will be provided with the information required to apply for his or her birth certificate, subject to certain conditions.

The term ‘illegal adoption’ is used to cover a wide range of situations and actions including the incorrect registration of a birth. The Bill also provides that a person who was in an informal arrangement where no adoption order was affected and persons whose birth was incorrectly registered can apply for information and tracing services.

The Bill provides that the Adoption Authority of Ireland will be responsible for collecting, restoring, preserving and safekeeping of adoption records, including information relating to informal adoptions and persons whose birth was incorrectly registered.

I share the Deputy’s concern in relation to those persons who are affected by adoption and must await the passage of the legislation to access their history. My focus is on proceeding with the Bill as quickly as possible, so that we can move to a situation where these new rights and services are available to this cohort of people. My officials are currently actively engaged in drafting Committee Stage amendments to address issues raised in the debate to date and I hope to progress the Bill as soon as possible.

**Youth Services Funding**

52. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the contingency plans available to fund an organisation (details supplied) if her Department’s line of funding is not restored before 30 June 2018; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18896/18]

386. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs her plans to fund an organisation (details supplied) should it be unable to address its administrative and governance issues before its funding ceases in June 2018; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18930/18]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 52 and 386 together.

Scouting Ireland is partly funded by my Department under the Youth Service Grant Scheme. The funding provided under this scheme is contingent on organisations meeting a range of governance requirements. This includes its commitment to and compliance with its legal requirements in the area of child protection as set out in the Children First Act 2015 and the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Acts 2012 and 2016.

I have a duty of care regarding the public funding provided by my Department and I must be satisfied that an organisation’s governance standards are up to a required level before I can consider the restoration of public funding.

It is a matter for Scouting Ireland to examine alternative sources of funding in the absence of funding provided my Department under the Youth Service Grant Scheme.

My Department also provides funding to local scout groups in the form of small grants under the Youth Club Grant Scheme which is administered by the sixteen Education and Training Boards. This grant funding is still available to scouting groups at a local level.
53. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the actions being taken to investigate serious issues and allegations regarding risk to children awaiting a service and the neglect of those children already in care contained in a protected disclosure by a person (details supplied); and the actions being taken to hold to account the persons responsible in the case of a child. [18815/18]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** The issues referred to by the Deputy have been, and continue to be, the subject of investigation. I do not propose to comment on the specific matters raised at this stage.

I can, however, assure the Deputy that I have attached particular importance to allegations made regarding possible risk to children and I have sought, through a series of actions, to be assured that services provided to children in the area in question are safe. Information has been shared with the relevant statutory bodies in this regard, each of which has a particular remit with regard to issues raised.

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**Foster Care Supports**

54. **Deputy Denise Mitchell** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs when the issue of public liability insurance cover for foster carers will be rectified; the progress made in resolving the issue to date; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18724/18]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** I would like to take this opportunity to assure you my Department is fully supportive of extending the State Indemnity Scheme under the State Claims Agency to foster parents.

Unfortunately this is taking longer than expected due to technical issues associated with the approvals and statutory process involved. Work is ongoing to address these matters. While we remain confident that these issues will be addressed, I can also confirm that the Department has approached the Department of Public Expenditure in order to put in place an interim solution.

This interim solution consists of advising Tusla that, while discussions continue between the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in relation to including foster carers under the General Indemnity Scheme operated by the State Claims Agency, no approval for overall indemnification can be provided at this stage. However, both Departments are aware of the critical importance of this matter and are committed to ensuring that every foster parent is offered an indemnity on an individual basis where required.

In this regard, any such individual indemnification would be on an ex-gratia basis and, as such, indemnification would be made available voluntarily and outside any strict legal obligation. This is a temporary measure to address immediate individual cases while the overall indemnification issues are being resolved.

It might also be noted that the Irish Foster Care Association have been appraised of matters as they stand and my officials have undertaken to keep the Association informed as to progress in the matter.

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**Departmental Contracts**
55. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs further to Parliamentary Question No. 12 of 22 February 2018, her plans to commission an independent review of the operating system for childcare with particular regard to Pobal; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18841/18]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** As referenced in Parliamentary Question No. 12 of 22 February 2018, I intend to conduct a review of the systems and structures which operate nationally and locally to support childcare provision. This will include consideration of the role of 30 City and County Childcare Committees, various National Voluntary Childcare Organisations and Pobal.

I am currently advancing a cross-Government, ten year strategy for children aged 5 and under and their families. I plan to publish this before the end of the year and it will contain significant content relating to the provision of accessible, high quality and affordable childcare and the governance, administrative systems and investment required to achieve these objectives. It is important that the review of systems is consistent with the policy direction set in this strategy and hence, the review will follow from the publication of the strategy. Development of the review therefore remains in the early planning stages but is particularly timely given the increased investment (80%) in the sector in budgets 2016, 2017 and 2018.

A review of this kind represents an opportunity to take stock of existing governance arrangements and examine the high-level Early Years operating model to ensure that it will be adequate to support the delivery of the Affordable Childcare Scheme, the ECCE scheme, and all the childcare related elements of the Early Years Strategy.

In the interim, my Department will continue to have robust governance arrangements in place with Pobal.

**Affordable Childcare Scheme Implementation**

56. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the status of the implementation of the affordable childcare scheme; the date by which the information and communication technology infrastructure will be launched; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18801/18]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** Thank you Deputy Rabbitte. I would be delighted to update you on positive progress in preparing the new Affordable Childcare Scheme.

Officials from my Department, along with colleagues in Pobal, have been working hard to develop the legal, technical and administrative infrastructure for the new Affordable Childcare Scheme. This scheme will provide financial support for parents, establish a sustainable platform for investment in the childcare sector for decades to come and- crucially- allow us to continue to invest in giving our children the best start in life.

As you know, the Childcare Support Bill passed all stages in the Dáil in the first quarter of this year. I was delighted with the positive, cross party support it received and want to thank you again for your valuable input. The Bill has now completed Second Stage in the Seanad and will commence Committee Stage this Thursday.

Alongside the Childcare Support Bill, intensive work is ongoing on the drafting of supporting regulations for the scheme and on regulations to provide, for the first time, for the registration of school-age childcare providers. The latter regulations will ensure that all school-age
childcare services are registered with Tusla prior to the introduction of the Affordable Childcare Scheme and can participate in the scheme from the outset.

With regard to the scheme’s supporting IT infrastructure, good progress is being made. In January I published a Request for Tenders for the development of a new IT system and an evaluation of tenders received is currently coming to a conclusion. The introduction of the scheme is dependent on this new IT system. As such, as soon as a contract is awarded to a successful bidder and a timeframe agreed for the completion of the system, I hope to be in a position to confirm and communicate an official launch date for the Affordable Childcare Scheme. For planning and procurement purposes, we have an indicative estimated timeframe of late May/June 2019 for opening the system to applications, with financial supports flowing from September 2019.

Work is also ongoing on the administrative and communication elements of the scheme. In particular, specialist expertise has been procured to support the detailed development of a robust governance framework for the scheme. A high-level Communications and Engagement Strategy was published in February and a training needs analysis is underway at present. Both of these provide the starting point for significant work in preparing timely and user-friendly information, resources and supports for parents, providers and other stakeholders. In tandem with the development of these resources, I am also committed to ongoing consultation and engagement with all stakeholders in the run-up to the introduction of the scheme.

As you know, ACS is ambitious in scale and complex in its design but I am delighted that we are achieving our milestones in its development and confident of the lasting impact it will have once launched.

Finally, in order to fast-track some of the benefits of the new scheme, last September I introduced a new universal subsidy, worth up to €1,040 per year for children under three in registered childcare, alongside significantly increased subsidies under existing targeted schemes. I can confirm to you that these supports have now reached the families of over 74,000 children, well in excess of our original estimate of 70,000. Of these 74,000 children, over 35,500 are receiving the new universal subsidy, while a further 38,700 are receiving up to €145 per week towards the cost of their childcare. I have confirmed that these supports will remain in place until the Affordable Childcare Scheme goes live.

Question No. 57 answered with Question No. 46.

Internet Safety

58. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the status of her Department’s work to implement the recommendations of the Internet content governance advisory group; the actions she is taking to keep children safe online; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18802/18]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** Keeping children safe online requires a whole of government approach. I am committed to playing my part in a co-ordinated cross-Government approach.

The Department of the Taoiseach is currently developing an Action Plan on online safety involving all relevant departments to ensure that our actions are coordinated, complementary and robust. Officials in my Department are participating in this process.

While my department does not have a lead responsibility in this area, it does play an impor-
Child protection is our mission. The Children First Act 2015 places a number of statutory obligations on organisations providing relevant services to children. These obligations include a requirement to keep children safe from harm while they are availing of the service; a requirement to carry out a risk assessment, and, a requirement to prepare a child safeguarding statement which sets out the policies and procedures which are in place to mitigate these risks.

In this regard, my Department plans to amend the Children First Guidance to include a specific reference to the need to consider online safety in the completion of a Child Safeguarding Statement.

I am also concerned that the voices of children and young people will be heard and acted upon when we make decisions on internet safety. My Department undertakes and supports consultation and participation processes. This includes developing structures to enable such participation in decision making by children and young people. Such structures include both Dáil na nÓg and Comhairle na nÓg.

Earlier this year, the Deputy was on the Oireachtas Committee of Children and Young People that met with groups of young people from Counties Clare and Wicklow Comhairle na nÓg on this important subject. It is only through engagement with young people that we can find the solutions that will work.

I am aware that the Oireachtas Committee also considered the recommendations of the Internet Content Governance Advisory Group. Responsibility to advance proposals in relation to that Group’s recommendations rests with the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and the Environment.

Family Resource Centres

59. **Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the way in which €160,000 in funding was allocated to the new family resource centres in view of the fact that existing centres operate with less funding; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18608/18]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, administers the Family Resource Centre Programme.

Acting as a focal point within their communities, Family Resource Centres provide a holistic service of child, family and community support and advocacy to all children and families in their communities.

At the end of 2017 there were 109 Family Resource Centres in receipt of funding from Tusla, the Child and Family Agency. Tusla was provided with additional funding of €3m in 2018 to expand the programme with the inclusion of 11 additional centres, bringing the total number of Family Resource Centres to 120.

Funding for individual Family Resource Centres differs, depending on a range of factors, including:

- the size and population of the catchment area,
- the degree of economic disadvantage in the area, and
- the existing distribution of services in the area.

Additional funding of up to €10,000 is also being allocated to existing Family Resource Centres this year. This is in addition to once-off funding of €2.120m distributed at the end of 2017 to existing centres for the purchase of equipment and minor capital works.

It is not possible at this stage to advise on what level of funding will be available to the Family Resource Centre Programme in 2019. However, I can assure the Deputy that I very much value the work of Family Resource Centres across the country and I will continue to support the centres in the valuable work they do, working with vulnerable children and families, particularly in areas of disadvantage.

Child Abuse

60. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the extent to which she remains satisfied that adequate protection is in place to ensure early reporting and prompt action in cases of suspected child abuse, whether in State institutions, foster care or in the home; the number of outstanding cases awaiting attention; the average timescale for investigating such issues; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18843/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The safety of all children, and particularly those living in State care, is a key priority for me. On December 11 2017, I commenced the remaining provisions of the Children First Act, 2015. This saw the introduction of mandatory reporting of child protection concerns. The Children First Act 2015 places a statutory obligation on persons, who have been identified by virtue of their position, training, qualifications and experience, to make reports of concerns of harm, above a defined threshold, to Tusla, The Child and Family Agency. All institutions providing services to children who are not in the company of their parents are now legislatively bound to undertake a risk assessment which should inform their Child Safeguarding Statement.

The additional resources secured for Tusla in 2018 will assist in meeting key priorities. The additional investment allows Tusla to recruit a range of additional staff to respond to areas of key risk, and to meet increased demand for services. The Deputy will be aware that referrals to Tusla are increasing on a year on year basis, and I anticipate there may be a further increase in referrals following the introduction of mandatory reporting. This increase in funding is also enabling the further management of unallocated cases. To improve the overall functioning of Child Protection Teams, Tusla is in the process of recruiting more administrative staff as well as social work practitioners.

Tusla has introduced an international evidenced practice methodology called “Signs of Safety” which should help to improve the depth and quality of the screening and assessments of referrals.

The first consideration when receiving a referral is the immediate safety of the child. All referrals to the Social Work Service of Children and Family Services are screened on the day they are received irrespective of the source.

The criteria for a member of the public or a mandated person to consider a referral of a child protection or welfare concern is also detailed in Children First National Guidance and in Tusla’s Children First Guide for the Reporting of Child Welfare and Protection Concerns.

Cases awaiting allocation fell by almost 17% to 4,756 compared to the same time period as last year.
Please find outlined in the following tables a breakdown of cases awaiting allocation by priority level and time waiting. These figures are published on the Tusla website on a quarterly basis.

### Cases Awaiting Allocation by Priority Level and Waiting Time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High Priority / Time Waiting</th>
<th>Q1 2017</th>
<th>Q2 2017</th>
<th>Q3 2017</th>
<th>Q4 2017*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 week</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 weeks</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-3 weeks</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4 weeks</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 months</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-3 months</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;3 months</td>
<td>436</td>
<td>426</td>
<td>357</td>
<td>346</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,062</td>
<td>991</td>
<td>966</td>
<td>731</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Based on incomplete returns (15/17 areas)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Medium Priority / Time Waiting</th>
<th>Q1 2017</th>
<th>Q2 2017</th>
<th>Q3 2017</th>
<th>Q4 2017*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 week</td>
<td>342</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 weeks</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>272</td>
<td>215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-3 weeks</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4 weeks</td>
<td>283</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>277</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 months</td>
<td>619</td>
<td>682</td>
<td>474</td>
<td>353</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-3 months</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>454</td>
<td>337</td>
<td>364</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;3 months</td>
<td>1,479</td>
<td>1,659</td>
<td>1,567</td>
<td>1,248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3,582</td>
<td>3,720</td>
<td>3,309</td>
<td>2,588</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Based on incomplete returns (15/17 areas)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Low Priority / Time Waiting</th>
<th>Q1 2017</th>
<th>Q2 2017</th>
<th>Q3 2017</th>
<th>Q4 2017*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 week</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 weeks</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-3 weeks</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4 weeks</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 months</td>
<td>2227</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-3 months</td>
<td>283</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;3 months</td>
<td>596</td>
<td>553</td>
<td>573</td>
<td>519</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,514</td>
<td>1,182</td>
<td>1,009</td>
<td>1,041</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Based on incomplete returns (15/17 areas)

### Census of Population Data

61. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Taoiseach the population of each of the New Ross, Enniscorthy and Wexford Garda districts, respectively. [18683/18]
Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach (Deputy Joe McHugh): Currently, the Central Statistics Offices has detailed information for Garda districts based on Census 2011 data available on its website.

The following table outlines the population for the Wexford Garda districts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Garda District</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New Ross</td>
<td>13,851</td>
<td>13,942</td>
<td>27,793</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enniscorthy</td>
<td>35,042</td>
<td>35,392</td>
<td>70,434</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wexford</td>
<td>23,116</td>
<td>24,198</td>
<td>47,314</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The CSO expects to produce small area population statistics for Garda boundaries based on Census 2016 information this year and will inform the Deputy when the data becomes available.

Strategic Communications Unit

62. Deputy Micheál Martin asked the Taoiseach the way in which the €2.5 million was spent by the strategic communications unit since its inception in September 2017. [18765/18]

The Taoiseach: The estimate for spend to date for the SCU is €2.2 million. This spend is primarily associated with citizen focussed information campaigns such as:

- Healthy Ireland
- Global Ireland
- Education Action Plan
- Bliain Na Gaeilge
- Self Employed Benefits
- Legislation
- Irish Aid
- Project Ireland 2040

In addition, spend has been allocated to the Gov.ie migration, the citizen survey on public awareness and understanding of government services, the Unified Identity Programme and the Continuing Professional Development programme, in alignment with the Government approved communications programme.

Departmental Budgets

63. Deputy Micheál Martin asked the Taoiseach if he will report on the Revised Estimate for his Department. [18863/18]

The Taoiseach: On 27 March 2018, the Government noted the comprehensive Review of the Operation of the Strategic Communications Unit (SCU) completed by the Secretary General to the Government, and accepted its recommendations.

Following the publication of the Review, I informed the House (and the Select Committee...
on Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform, and the Taoiseach) that the 2018 funding allocation for the Unit would be reduced by €2.5 million. Last week, a Further Revised Estimate for my Department was presented to the House to give effect to this decision.

My Department’s 2018 budget allocation has therefore been reduced from €35.891 million to €33.391 million, which is a reduction of 9% on its 2017 Estimate.

**Government Information Service**

64. Deputy Micheál Martin asked the Taoiseach if he will report on the role of the GIS in co-ordinating cross-departmental information campaigns. [18864/18]

The Taoiseach: GIS will continue to have a co-ordinating and supporting role for national, cross-Government communications, as has always been the case. Such campaigns will now be led and funded by the relevant line Department.

**Strategic Communications Unit**

65. Deputy Micheál Martin asked the Taoiseach when the citizen research for the strategic communications unit will commence. [18865/18]

The Taoiseach: The citizen research will commence once the opposition parties have been afforded an opportunity to review the proposed material. It is anticipated that this review will be initiated in the coming weeks and the subsequent survey will issue in late May 2018. Once the survey has been run and results collected and analysed, it is intended to publish it.

**Army Barracks**

66. Deputy Sean Fleming asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence when the Crimean War cannon placed in the Curragh will be returned to Port Laoise (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18634/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): It is not possible, within the time allocated to respond to PQs, to provide the information sought by the Deputy. The matter is being investigated with a view to furnishing a detailed response to the Deputy in due course.

**Diplomatic Representation**

67. Deputy Micheál Martin asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he has spoken or written to the Israeli ambassador about Israel’s 70th anniversary commemoration celebrations. [19090/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): I received an invitation from the Ambassador of Israel to attend an official reception to mark Israel’s Independence Day, which this year also marked the seventieth anniversary of Israel’s independence. I know that this is an important day for the Israeli people. For scheduling reasons, I was unable to attend, and my regrets were conveyed to the Ambassador.
68. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will address a matter (details supplied) raised in correspondence. [18641/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Ciarán Cannon):** The crisis in Syria remains of utmost concern to Ireland. The conflict, which is now in its eighth year, has cost up to 500,000 lives. Over 13 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance inside Syria, including close to 3 million people trapped in besieged and hard-to-reach areas. Over 6 million people are displaced internally, and a further 5.5 million have fled to neighbouring countries and the wider region. There have been repeated breaches of international humanitarian and human rights law. There have been numerous instances of denial and diversion of humanitarian aid, the use of medieval ‘starve or surrender’ siege tactics and the use of chemical weapons. I am aware of the correspondence to which the Deputy refers and I fully concur with the sentiment of concern expressed by the petitioners about this appalling situation.

Ireland and the EU fully support the efforts of UN Special Envoy for Syria Staffan de Mistura to bring about an end to the conflict. The EU provides direct assistance to the UN-led Geneva peace talks and has launched, in coordination with the UN, an initiative to identify common political ground with key actors from the region. We also support a broad range of measures to ensure full legal accountability for all war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Syria. Ireland has been a strong and consistent donor to the humanitarian response to the crisis.

I attended the Second Brussels Conference “Supporting Syria and the Region” on the 24th of April. I met with key EU and UN humanitarian and political partners - including EU Commissioner Christos Stylianides and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi - to discuss further humanitarian assistance and highlight our commitment to a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

At the conference, Ireland reiterated its support for the UN-led efforts to bring about a resolution of the conflict. Ireland also called on the international community, particularly those with influence on the parties to the conflict, to redouble efforts to ensure a ceasefire and unimpeded humanitarian access. Ireland condemned the repeated breaches of international law which have taken place in Syria, and called for full legal accountability for all war crimes and crimes against humanity, particularly the use of chemical weapons.

Ireland also pledged a further €25 million in humanitarian support in 2018 - maintaining the same level of assistance as provided last year. This brings Ireland’s support since 2012 to over €100 million – our largest ever response to a single crisis.

69. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the details of Ireland’s involvement in contributing to the humanitarian effort in Syria. [18643/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Ciarán Cannon):** Since 2012, Ireland has provided over €108 million in response to the Syria crisis. This represents Ireland’s largest ever engagement with a humanitarian crisis.

Our funding provides supports to those in need inside Syria as well as Syrian refugees and vulnerable host communities in the region. We work with UN, Red Cross and NGO partners to ensure that our funding reaches the most vulnerable. These partners provide humanitarian
supplies and urgently needed health, education, water and sanitation services, as well as implementing measures to protect women, children and vulnerable families.

Through our membership of the EU, Ireland also supports the EU’s humanitarian response in Syria. The EU and its member states are the single biggest donor to the Syria crisis having mobilised over €10.6 billion in humanitarian, stabilisation and resilience assistance since 2012.

In addition, through the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), to which Ireland is the eighth largest donor, a total of over $100m has been provided to Syria.

At the recent Second Brussels Conference “Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region” on the 24-25 April, Ireland pledged €25 million in humanitarian assistance in response to the Syria crisis for 2018 and made a commitment to multi-annual support beyond 2018. We have begun to fulfil our 2018 pledge, having provided funding of over €15 million to UN and Red Cross partners for response inside Syria and in the broader region. We are currently preparing an additional disbursement to NGO partners, and funding to other humanitarian partners is also under consideration.

The Government remains strongly committed to supporting those affected by the Syria crisis. We will continue to monitor the situation and provide funding where needs are greatest. We will also continue to advocate within the EU and UN for a political solution to the crisis.

Human Rights Cases

70. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade his plans to appeal the recent ruling of the European Court of Human Rights in respect of persons (details supplied). [17815/18]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** On 20 March last, the European Court of Human Rights issued its judgment on the Government’s application for a revision of the ruling in the 1978 Ireland v UK case. The ruling is being fully considered by the Government.

It is important to note that, although the Court dismissed the Government’s application for a revision, nothing in the ruling alters the Court’s original 1978 judgment that the men suffered inhuman and degrading treatment, in breach of Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

The question of seeking a referral of the ruling to the Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights is a decision for the Government, taking account of advice from the Attorney General. There is a window of three months after the judgment by the Court for a referral.

No decision has yet been reached on this matter. The ruling needs to be considered fully and carefully and that is now being done.

My thoughts at this time are with the men who were subjected to the appalling treatment and who have had to deal with long-lasting adverse effects in the decades since. I met with a group of the men and close family members of some of the other victims and their legal representatives on 24 April, in order to hear their views and experience.

They are understandably disappointed with the ruling by the European Court of Human Rights in March. I listened very carefully to their views on this ruling, and those of their legal representatives. I also noted that any further information or views that they may wish to pro-
vide as the Government considers the ruling by the European Court of Human Rights should be provided to my Department as soon as possible and this will be considered fully.

My Department has maintained contact on an ongoing basis with the legal representatives of the men and their families as appropriate, since the Government submitted an application in 2014 for a revision of the 1978 Ireland v UK case. This contact will be maintained in the period ahead.

**Overseas Development Aid**

71. **Deputy Seán Crowe** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the academic scholarships available for Palestinian citizens to study here; the courses that are covered by the scholarships; and the requirements in order to be considered for a scholarship. [18832/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Ciarán Cannon):** Ireland’s funding to the Palestinian people has traditionally had a strong focus on the education sector, which is crucial to Palestine’s long-term economic viability. The provision of scholarship opportunities for Palestinian students to study in Ireland is an important dimension of our overall support.

In January this year, the Tánaiste announced an increase of €200,000 in scholarship funding for Palestinian students. Funding is being ring-fenced to create further opportunities for Palestinian students to undertake Masters level courses in our Higher Education Institutions in Ireland. This is a first step towards scaling up a scholarship programme for Palestinian students over the next five years. The programme is intended to focus on courses which will enhance labour market skills and, in particular, in the areas identified by the Palestinian Authority where there is a deficit. The programme will be accessible to groups across Palestinian society with the relevant undergraduate qualifications, enhancing opportunities for women and providing opportunities to other previously under-represented groups.

Ireland has long been a strong supporter of the development of modern and quality education for all Palestinians in conjunction with our partners, the Palestinian Authority and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees. This scholarship programme will be another tangible expression of that support.

Furthermore, there is an existing Irish Aid Fellowship Training Programme (FTP), which has been part of Ireland’s broad programme of support to capacity building in Partner countries for over 40 years and which aims to address capacity deficits that hinder the attainment of long-term development goals through the training and development of key individuals. Fellowships are also offered at Masters’ level and Palestinian students can also apply for a scholarship under this programme to study in Ireland. Successful Palestinian fellows have studied a variety of different courses including human rights law and global health at Higher Level Institutions in Ireland. Information on the FTP can be found on Irish Aid’s Fellowship website at [www.iris-haidfellowships.ie](http://www.iris-haidfellowships.ie).

**Northern Ireland**

72. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the status of the negotiations on reconvening the Northern Ireland Assembly; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18862/18]
Deputy Micheál Martin asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if his departmental officials have met with him recently to report on the progress on the talks to reconvene the Northern Ireland Assembly. [18809/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): I propose to take Questions Nos. 72 and 74 together.

Over the course of many months, the Irish and British Governments, as co-guarantors of the Good Friday Agreement, have worked tirelessly to support and facilitate the parties in their efforts to form a Northern Ireland Executive.

The devolved, power-sharing institutions are at the heart of the Good Friday Agreement and are the best means for achieving accountable, representative decision-making for all the people of Northern Ireland.

Unfortunately, to date, it has not proved possible to reach an agreement on the formation of an Executive, despite intensive engagement. In light of this, the Government has been working with the British Government to consider means by which we can support the political process, in accordance with the Agreement, in the period ahead.

The Taoiseach has spoken with Prime Minister May and emphasised the Government’s full commitment to the Good Friday Agreement, and our continuing determination to secure the effective operation of all of its institutions.

I am in very regular contact with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Karen Bradley, as we seek a way beyond the current impasse. Most recently, I have met with Secretary of State Bradley on 10 April, on 16 April and we spoke further by phone on 27 April.

Over the last two weeks, the Secretary of State and I have each been conducting a round of contacts with the Northern Ireland political parties, to hear their views on how at this stage the two Governments can support the political process, in accordance with the Agreement.

All parties have re-affirmed their commitment to operating the devolved institutions and provided views on their key concerns and issues to be addressed in seeking a way forward.

In light of these consultations, the Secretary of State and I will consider how best the two Governments, as co-guarantors of the Good Friday Agreement, can chart a way forward that will give the best prospects for getting the devolved institutions operating again without delay.

I will continue to engage intensively, working with Secretary of State Bradley and the leaders of all of the political parties, until that is achieved.

My officials are engaging intensively in support of these objectives and are reporting to me on a daily basis.

The Good Friday Agreement is the indispensable framework for providing stable, inclusive, power-sharing government for all the people of Northern Ireland and for sustaining our interlocking relationships – within Northern Ireland, on the island of Ireland and between the UK and Ireland.

As co-guarantors of the Good Friday Agreement, both Governments have an obligation to uphold and protect the letter and spirit of that Agreement and we are continuing to work to that end.

White Paper on Irish Aid
73. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade when the consultation process will commence on the planned White Paper on Irish overseas development assistance; the expected publication date for the White Paper; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18931/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Ciarán Cannon):** The Government is strongly committed to Ireland’s overseas development cooperation programme and to its place at the heart of our foreign policy. My Department will produce a new White Paper on international development policy in 2018.

Our ambition in the White Paper will be to continue to lead and participate in collective global aspirations for a better world, as reflected in the Sustainable Development Goals.

Internal preparations and analysis are already underway. The consultation process is following Department of Public Expenditure and Reform guidelines. Consultation across Government is ongoing and a public consultation will be launched before the summer, involving both public meetings and online opportunities to input. The new policy will be launched shortly thereafter, taking on board the outputs from the public consultation phase.

The White Paper will also build on the independent work of the review of the Irish Aid programme recently undertaken by the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Trade (JCFAT).

*Question No. 74 answered with Question No. 72.*

**Brexit Negotiations**

75. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if officials in his Department have briefed him on the status of Brexit negotiations and the preparations being made for March 2019. [18808/18]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** In addition to my personal engagement on Brexit issues, which are a top priority for me and my Department, I have weekly meetings with my senior officials in relation to the Article 50 negotiations. We discuss both Irish specific issues as well as those on the discussion with regard to the EU’s future relationship with the UK, which are also vitally important for Ireland. I am also kept informed of the progress of domestic preparations for Brexit. As this is a fast moving process, I often discuss the negotiations with my officials between those meetings, and I am in any case kept continually briefed.

Co-ordination of the whole-of-Government response to Brexit is being taken forward through the cross-Departmental coordination structures chaired by my Department, including the Inter-Departmental Group on the EU and Brexit, which meets on a fortnightly basis.

Contingency planning for a no-deal or worst-case outcome in March 2019, bringing together the detailed work being undertaken by individual Ministers and their Departments on issues within their policy remits, is very well advanced. Its focus is on the immediate regulatory and operational challenges which would result from such an outcome. It assumes a trading relationship based on the default WTO rules, but also examines the possible effects on many other areas of concern. This work is therefore providing baseline scenarios for the impact of Brexit across all sectors, which can then be adapted as appropriate in light of developments in the EU-UK negotiations, including in regard to transition arrangements and the future relationship. It also takes account of the planning being undertaken at EU level by the new Commission Prepared-
ness Unit, which is issuing information notes aimed at different business sectors.

Before the summer the Government will finalise a paper, building on that published in May 2017, on our approach to the negotiations and our latest assessment of the economic and sectorial challenges posed by Brexit and our responses to them.

Revenue Commissioners Staff

76. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Finance the reason officials from the Revenue Commissioners have not been attending county council joint policing committee, JPC, meetings in the north-west region despite assurances to Deputies in a meeting in October 2017 that they would do so in order to address concerns about the importation of narcotics in the area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18555/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I am advised by Revenue that it is available to attend meetings of Joint Policing Committees (JPC) to address concerns regarding the importation of narcotics and has already attended a meeting of the Mayo JPC following an invitation from Mayo County Council.

Revenue has not been invited to, or notified of, any other such meetings in the North West area. Revenue has confirmed that it will participate in any future JPC meetings if invited to do so by the relevant local authority.

Banking Sector Remuneration

77. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the position in respect of the ongoing assessment by the Revenue Commissioners of certain benefit-in-kind, BIK, issues relating to staff and ex-staff of banks here; the nature of the BIK issues being assessed; the position in respect of the issue; when he expects the matter to be resolved; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18573/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** It is assumed that the reference to “certain benefit in kind issues” is a reference to preferential loans to bank employees, including where the employee has left the bank’s employment.

Section 122(3) of the Taxes Consolidation Act (TCA) 1997 provides that where a loan is made by an employer to an employee and the loan, or any interest due on that loan, is written off, in whole or in part, then the amount written off is treated as a taxable benefit in the hands of the employee (or former employee where the employee has left the bank’s employment). It is the responsibility of the bank, as the employer, to identify any benefits to staff to which section 122(3) TCA 1997 applies and to compute and pay the tax liability.

I am informed by Revenue that its approach to the possible application of section 122(3) in the case of loan restructurings, involving the full or partial write-down for an employee or former employee, is that where non-preferential loan(s) are/were originally advanced by a bank to the employee in the normal course of business and the bank can show to Revenue’s satisfaction that the outcome of the write-down would be the same for that employee or former employee as it would be for a non-employee customer of the bank, then no liability to income tax will arise in respect of the write-off of the non-preferential loan(s).

If the employee or former employee has only preferential loans from the bank then section 122(3) TCA 1997 applies to give rise to a tax liability on the full amount written off by the bank.
If there are a number of loans, including preferential loans, then, regardless of the order of the write-off, the amount written off has to be first set against the amount of any preferential loan(s) outstanding and any tax liability arising on the preferential loan(s), so treated as written off first, has to be paid in accordance with section 122(3) TCA 1997.

I am advised by Revenue that it has outlined its approach in this matter to individual banks which have been identified as potentially impacted.

**Mortgage Applications Approvals**

78. **Deputy Peter Fitzpatrick** asked the Minister for Finance the reason a family (details supplied) that has been discharged from bankruptcy is unable to get mortgage approval two years later; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18588/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The Deputy may be aware that, as Minister for Finance, I have no direct function in the relationship between banks and their customers. Decisions taken by banks in this regard, and the manner in which they conduct their day-to-day operations, are matters for the board and management of the respective banks. Notwithstanding the fact that the State has shareholdings in some of the banks, I must ensure that these institutions are run on a commercial, cost-effective and independent basis to protect their value as assets to the State. Relationship Frameworks have been specified that define the nature of the relationship between the Minister for Finance and the banks and these Frameworks are available on the Department’s website.

As the circumstance described by the Deputy is a matter concerning certain banks, the individuals involved should continue to engage with these banks. Should the matter not be resolved to the individuals’ satisfaction, they can refer the matter to the Financial Services and Pensions Ombudsman.

**Knowledge Development Box**

79. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance his views on the uptake of the knowledge development box in view of the fact that the initial estimate in budget 2016 was €31 million in the first year and €50 million in a full year; the way in which this estimate was arrived at; if he is satisfied that the knowledge development box is achieving its objectives; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18638/18]

80. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the estimated cost of rolling out the knowledge development box set out in budget 2016; the number of companies that were expected to avail of the scheme at the time; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18639/18]

81. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the measures being taken to increase the uptake of the knowledge development box; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18640/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 79 to 81, inclusive, together.

The Knowledge Development Box (KDB) was introduced by the Finance Act 2015. It provides for relief from tax on the profits earned from the exploitation of patents, copyrighted software and IP for small companies, provided that IP was developed through R and D carried
out in Ireland.

The potential cost of the KDB was arrived at by looking at the taxable profits of the companies who claimed the R and D tax credit in 2014 and who it was considered might be in a position to claim the KDB. For example, certain categories of companies (such as multinational-owned companies) were excluded as it was considered they would not have the required structures to facilitate claims under the KDB.

I am informed by Revenue that, to date, not more than 10 companies have claimed relief under the KDB and that the tax cost of these claims to date is no more than €5 million. However, these figures are as yet preliminary due to the deadlines which apply for submission of claims. Relief under the KDB was introduced for accounting periods ending on or after 1 January 2016. Therefore, the first corporation tax returns in which relief could be claimed were due for filing up to 23 September 2017. However, as the regime is complex and a company must make an irrevocable election into the KDB, the legislation provided that companies had a 24-month period in which to make their claim for relief. Therefore, most companies have until the end of this year to submit their claims for their 2016 accounting periods.

At the outset it was anticipated that companies would make full use of that 24-month period to make a decision on whether or not to elect into the KDB. Therefore, it is expected that the figures relating to the companies who have already claimed the relief are preliminary and should not be used to assess the impact of the relief until they are finalised after December this year.

With regard to the Deputy’s question as to measures taken to increase uptake of the KDB, I am advised by Revenue that they have published extensive guidance on the KDB. They have presented at a number of R and D industry events to help ensure a consistency of approach in applying the legislation, and also ensure that uncertainties on the application of the KDB are identified at an early stage and addressed. As taxpayers encounter uncertainty in the application of the rules – particularly those around the tracking and tracing documentation requirements – Revenue will develop updated examples to bring clarity to issues identified.

I also understand that a number of State Agencies are actively engaged in promoting the use of the KDB. The IDA and Enterprise Ireland have presented at a number of R and D industry events. Additionally, since its introduction, the IDA have promoted the KDB to existing and new clients.

Banking Sector Regulation

82. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if there is a mechanism in place whereby the Financial Services and Pensions Ombudsman can refer issues and investigations to the Central Bank if it is of the view they are systemic issues; the number of such cases referred in each of the past four years and to date in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18694/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** Firstly, I must point out that the Financial Services and Pensions Ombudsman is independent in the performance of his statutory functions. I have no role in the day to day workings of the office.

As the Deputy will be aware the Financial Services and Pensions Ombudsman (FSPO) was established on 1 January 2018 under the Financial Services and Pensions Ombudsman Act 2017. I have been advised by the Ombudsman that Section 18 of the Act sets out how the Ombudsman shall co-operate with the regulatory authorities with a view to ensuring that this
Act operates in a way that contributes to promoting the best interests of consumers and actual or potential beneficiaries of financial or pension services and to the efficient and effective handling of complaints.

The Act provides that the Ombudsman may make recommendations to the Central Bank in relation to measures that the Bank might take in order to effectively deal with persistent patterns of complaints. A similar provision existed in the legislation which underpinned the FSPO’s precursor body, the Financial Services Ombudsman (FSO), and the FSO and the Central Bank agreed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) which sets out the terms under which both parties give effect to these provisions. The MoU has not yet been updated to reflect the establishment of the FSPO on 1 January 2018, however, the original MoU continues to operate and is available on the FSPO website.

While the MoU provides for regular and routine information sharing, it also provides for specific information sharing whereby the FSPO will provide the Central Bank with detailed and specific information relating to a complaint (or complaints) for its general consideration in the following instances:

1. Where the circumstances of the case appear to call into question:
   - a financial service provider’s fitness and probity;
   - or whether any specified person may not be a fit and proper person to carry on a relevant function;
   - or if it appears that a criminal offence or a serious regulatory contravention has occurred.

2. If it appears that a complaint or a series of complaints may give rise or are giving rise to issues of regulatory relevance to the Central Bank (whether or not the financial service provider has itself drawn the issues to the attention of the Bank).

3. If it appears that it would be desirable and appropriate for the Central Bank to consider using one or more of its regulatory tools, including the exercise of its investigative and other enforcement powers, the making of rules or the giving of guidance to financial service providers.

4. In response to a request from the Central Bank where it is, or is contemplating, using any of its regulatory tools in relation to the subject matter of the request.

5. Where it appears that a regulated entity has failed to comply with an award, determination, or direction (or equivalent thereof) made by an Ombudsman, or a court order in respect thereof.

6. Where it appears that a financial service provider has, without reasonable excuse, failed to comply with a requirement to provide information or to produce documents to an Ombudsman.

7. If it appears that it may be necessary for the Central Bank to exercise its powers to address shortcomings in a financial service provider’s complaint handling procedures.

The following table outlines the number of cases in which the FSPO/FSO reported potential systemic issues to the Central Bank in each of the past four years and to date in 2018.

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<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of cases involving Potentially Systemic Issues</th>
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<tr>
<td>2014</td>
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<td>2015</td>
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Banking Operations

83. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the steps the Central Bank has taken regarding system issues whereby money has not shown up in some bank accounts (details supplied); if the attention of the Central Bank was drawn to such cases; if the Central Bank is concerned that other banks will be impacted; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18695/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I have been advised by the Central Bank that it is aware of an issue involving the bank accounts of certain bank customers in recent days. The Central Bank is monitoring the situation and is in contact with the institution in relation to this matter.

While the Central Bank cannot comment on individual interactions with regulated entities, Ulster Bank Ireland DAC (Ulster Bank) has been engaging with the Central Bank in relation to this matter.

Customers have a legitimate expectation of high quality, uninterrupted services, whether provided through traditional or online channels. The Central Bank expects all firms to have adequate systems and controls in place and where issues that impact customers arise they should be addressed and rectified urgently, particularly as customers are increasingly using and becoming dependent on online and mobile banking services. In this regard, the Central Bank expects firms to communicate clearly and promptly with affected customers when a technical incident occurs, including details of the impacted service, details of alternative access to services and an undertaking that identifiable loss will be remediated. Those expectations have been communicated to banks.

Bank IT Systems

84. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the role the Central Bank has in ensuring that information technology systems in place in banks are adequately designed, serviced and resourced to manage the increased usage of online banking; if the Central Bank undertakes regular inspections; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18696/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** As the Deputy is aware the European Central Bank (ECB) is responsible for all core supervisory responsibilities as defined in the Council Regulation (EU) No. 1024/2013 (SSMR). For Significant Institutions (which includes all the large retail banks in Ireland), a Joint Supervisory Team (JST), led by the ECB, and consisting of both ECB and Central Bank supervisors directly supervise these firms. In addition, on-site inspections are a tool used by the Single Supervisory Mechanism (SSM) in the supervision of banks and such on-site inspections are used in the area of IT risk. On-site inspections are carried out in line with the SSM supervisory processes, procedures, methodologies and manuals.

In response to the establishment of the SSM which assumed supervisory responsibility for
Eurozone banks in November 2014, the Central Bank created a three divisional banking supervisory function with responsibility for:

- Supervision;
- Inspections and
- Analytics.

The Inspections Division is responsible for conducting in-depth investigations of risks, risk controls and governance frameworks within Credit Institutions. These inspections cover risks such as Credit, Liquidity, Capital, Operational, IT, Business Model and Internal Governance. The inspections are performed by dedicated inspection teams at the premises of the Credit Institution. It is the responsibility of individual institutions to ensure that they have the necessary resources, including information systems, to deliver on their strategy. In addition, these resources must be subject to the necessary risk controls and governance commensurate with their complexity and risk.

Insurance Industry Regulation

85. Deputy Michael McGrath asked the Minister for Finance his views on recent reports that suggest insurance companies are using management fees to inflate premiums and to prevent outsiders from entering the market; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18697/18]

86. Deputy Michael McGrath asked the Minister for Finance if the Central Bank has a role in monitoring management fees booked by insurance companies; if the Central Bank collects data on management fees booked by insurance companies; if this data was gathered as part of the blue book that was discontinued; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18698/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 85 and 86 together.

As Minister for Finance, I am responsible for the development of the legal framework governing financial regulation. Neither I nor the Central Bank of Ireland can interfere in the 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.

I am aware of recent reports in the media relating to the management expenses of insurance undertakings. I understand that the coverage relates in particular to the portion of Net Premium Income which these costs represent.

The Central Bank has informed me that, audited insurance company returns to the Central Bank of Ireland show that total industry management expenses and commission have remained relatively stable over the last ten years.

Insurance Ireland has separately noted that the net premium income which has been referenced does not include the costs of reinsurance protection. In other words, it represents premium income retained by insurers following payments made for such reinsurance protection. This means that where the cost of reinsurance protection increases, net premium income by definition falls. Insurance Ireland has indicated that this is what has actually happened in some years
and that a comparison is being made in such years between a reduced net premium income and a level of management expenses that have not risen in absolute terms and have remained largely the same since 2005. This they say is demonstrated by Central Bank Statistics on motor management expenses which in 2005 amounted to €224 million and in 2015 were €216 million. They say that the effect of this comparison is to create an apparent spike in management expenses in recent times, which does not reflect the reality of the situation.

Insurance Ireland has also pointed out that reinsurance is an essential risk management tool for insurers as it involves the transfer of claims risk to a reinsurer. There is a cost associated with this as such reinsurance entities must also meet their own regulatory solvency requirements and therefore they charge the appropriate reinsurance premium to cover such risks, which an insurer must pay.

In relation to the Deputy’s second query, the Central Bank has informed me, that information on management expenses was included in the Solvency I returns that were submitted to the Central Bank. These audited returns formed the basis of the blue book. Those returns were based on the insurance companies’ financial statements, which were audited, and are available from the Companies Office.

It should be noted that information on management expenses is also available in the Solvency II returns submitted to the Central Bank. Interested parties seeking data at company level can find such data in publically available reports which are required of all insurance undertakings under the Solvency II regime. These reports are known as the Solvency and Financial Condition Reports (SFCRs). The SFCRs include a detailed narrative report on the insurance undertaking coupled with key quantitative reporting templates that contain premiums, claims, expenses, technical provisions, solvency and other information. All SFCRs for 2016 are made available by the Central Bank in a dedicated SFCR repository which can be accessed at


Whilst the Central Bank monitors the levels of management expenses at a company and industry level it has no role in the control of those expenses.

It is worth noting also that one of the recommendations of the Cost of Insurance Working Group linked to increasing transparency in the insurance sector is the publication of key aggregated metrics on claims costs and trends within the market, as an interim measure prior to the establishment of the National Claims Database. In July of last year, I published the first of these reports on the Department’s website: http://www.finance.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/1st-Motor-Insurance-Key-Information-Report.pdf. That Report provides information on the expenditure of a large portion of the insurance industry for the years 2011 to 2016 as a percentage of gross premium income. In that regard, the data provided by insurers indicates that combined commissions and other operating expenses reduced from 18.9% to 17.4% during that time.

In conclusion, the reports in the media demonstrate the need for the National Claims Information Database. It is clear that there is a need to be able to collect data related to the income and expenditure of insurers, in addition to the data linked to the costs associated with claims. Having such information will assist policyholders and researchers to better understand the drivers of the costs of insurance. This is one of the central policy aims of the National Claims Information Database and I think the publication of such data at industry level will facilitate an understanding into how particular expenses may or may not have an impact on the overall cost of insurance.
87. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the status of the central bank (national claims information database) Bill; when it will be introduced and enacted; if concerns put forward by an organisation (details supplied) will delay the publishing of the Bill; the changes that will be made as a result of the submission made by the organisation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18700/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** On 19 December 2017, the Government approved the General Scheme of the Central Bank (National Claims Information Database) Bill, which was prepared following extensive work on the part of the Data Sub-group of the Cost of Insurance Working Group last year.

The Office of the Parliamentary Counsel assigned a drafter to the Bill on 26 January 2017 and officials in my Department are currently working with the drafter to finalise the Bill as soon as possible.

I also submitted the Bill to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform and the Taoiseach for Pre-legislative Scrutiny at the beginning of the year, and that Committee contacted me in February to indicate that it would not be conducting any further scrutiny on the Bill.

A public consultation was launched on the General Scheme which concluded in March and the responses received were published on my Departments website: http://www.finance.gov.ie/updates/responses-to-central-bank-national-claims-information-database-bill-2017-consultation/. A number of responses were received from industry and business groups. My officials have been reviewing the content of these responses as they relate to the drafting of the Bill. As part of the process of finalising the Bill, the Department is assessing the responses with regard to the validity of the concerns expressed against the overall policy aim of the legislation.

The Deputy will recall that the policy aim of the Database is to enable policymakers to better understand the factors that influence the cost of insurance. This will require the collection of information linked to other factors such as the income and costs of insurers, and the settlement channels used to settle claims and the associated costs. On the basis of its review of the responses to date, the Department does not anticipate that substantive amendments will be required at this stage and therefore it is not anticipated to give rise to any delay in the finalisation and publication of the Bill.

In that regard, the Bill is included in the Government Legislative Programme on the list of Priority Legislation for publication this session and based on drafting progress to date I anticipate being in a position to publish the Bill before the summer recess.

A consultation will also have to take place with the European Central Bank on the Bill once it is published.

As the Deputy will be aware, it will take a certain amount of time following publication of the Bill, for it to pass through the Houses of the Oireachtas however I am hopeful that with the cooperation of all parties in the Houses, the Bill can be considered and approved expeditiously.

**Credit Ratings**

88. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if persons’ credit ratings with the central credit register will be affected if payments were rejected as a result of the in-
formation technology issue at banks (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18753/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The Central Bank has advised that the Central Credit Register is being implemented on a phased basis. Phase 1 started on 30 June 2017 and included the submission of information on consumer loans such as credit cards, personal loans, mortgages and overdrafts. The information is provided by lenders to the Central Credit Register on a monthly basis, and represents the position of a loan as at the end of a month. Lenders are obliged to submit information that is accurate, complete and up to date.

Since 20 March 2018 credit reports containing this information have been available on request. Borrowers can request their report at any time free of charge and have a right to seek an amendment for any information that they believe is inaccurate, incomplete or out of date. Although provided for in the Credit Reporting Act 2013, the Central Credit Register does not calculate a score or rating for credit reports.

Phase 1b included submission of information from moneylenders and some other lenders. This phase started on 31 March 2018. Lenders have until 30 September 2018 to complete the submission of information, backdated to 31 March 2018. Phase 2 included business loans. This phase started on 31 March 2018 and these lenders have until 30 September 2018 to complete the submission of information.

**Corporation Tax**

89. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the number of payments a company (details supplied) will make into the escrow account; when the entire amount will be paid into the account; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18754/18]

91. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the body that will be responsible for the costs incurred on the management of an escrow account (details supplied); the expected cost of running the escrow account; the body that will have a right to the annual yield of the fund; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18756/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 89 and 91 together.

The Government does not accept the Commission’s analysis in the Apple State aid Decision and has lodged an appeal in the European Courts. However, we have always been clear that we are fully committed to ensuring that recovery of the alleged Apple State aid takes place and have committed significant resources to ensuring this is achieved. Given the unprecedented scale of the recovery amount, this has been a complex technical and legal process.

As the Deputy may be aware, on 24 April the Escrow Framework Deed which sets out the detailed legal agreement regarding the recovery of the alleged State aid was signed by me on behalf of the Government and also signed by Apple. This is a significant milestone with regard to the commencement of the recovery of the alleged State aid. This followed recent announcements that the Bank of New York Mellon London Branch has been selected as the preferred tenderer for the provision of escrow agency and custodian services to the fund and Amundi, BlackRock Investment Management (UK) Limited and Goldman Sachs Asset Management International have been selected as preferred tenderers for the provision of investment management services.

The signing of the Escrow Framework Deed now allows for the final processes to be com-
completed including the formal appointment of the Escrow Agent/Custodian and the Investment Managers which in turn activates the process for the collection of the alleged State aid.

It is anticipated that the funds will flow into the escrow account in significant tranches and I expect that the full recovery will be effected by the end of Q3 2018.

In general, I should say that the costs associated with the fund are a liability of the fund. The arrangements in the Escrow Framework Deed include the agreement that all claims of ownership and access to these vast sums of money is suspended until the European Courts have concluded proceedings that the Government and Apple have brought.

**Corporation Tax**

90. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if payments made by a company (details supplied) into the escrow account will be deemed to be Government revenue under European fiscal rules at the time the moneys are paid; if the escrow account will be deemed on or off-balance sheet; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18755/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** Notwithstanding the appeal in the Apple State Aid case and the difference in view between Ireland and the Commission on the issue, the Government is committed to complying with the binding legal obligations that the Commission’s Final Decision places on Ireland. Apple therefore must be deprived of the benefit of the alleged aid, which the Commission have estimated will amount to approximately €13 billion plus interest, as set out in EU Regulations on the recovery of State Aid. These sums will be placed into an escrow fund with the proceeds being released only when there has been a final determination in the European Courts over the validity of the Commission’s Decision.

Following consultation with the Central Statistics Office and Eurostat, it has been confirmed that there will be no impact on the General Government balance and that there will be no fiscal impact for the period in which the funds are in escrow.

This is because Apple and the Government are challenging the Commission’s Decision of August 2016 before the European Courts, and it could be several years before this is ultimately resolved. The basis for this is set out in the European System of Accounts 2010 (ESA 2010), Paragraph 20.189 which states:

> When a court of justice rules that compensation must be paid, or a transaction reversed, resulting from or related to past events, the time of recording of the expenditure or revenue is when the claimants have an automatic and incontrovertible right for a given amount that can be individually determined, and when it is unlikely that claimants will fail requesting their due. When a court of justice merely sets a principle of compensation, or when the claims must be reviewed for eligibility and in relation to determination of the amount by administrative services, expenditure or revenue is recorded as soon as the value of the obligation is reliably determined.

As a result, the amount and timing are not recognised until a final judgement before the European courts.

*Question No. 91 answered with Question No. 89.*

**Banking Sector Regulation**

92. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the action the Central Bank will
take against a bank (details supplied) following its computer problems; the rights of the affected customers in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18798/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** While the Central Bank cannot comment on individual interactions with regulated entities, Ulster Bank Ireland DAC (Ulster Bank) has been engaging with the Central Bank in relation to this matter.

Customers have a legitimate expectation of high quality, uninterrupted services, whether provided through traditional or online channels. The Central Bank expects all firms to have adequate systems and controls in place and where issues that impact customers arise they should be addressed and rectified urgently, particularly as customers are increasingly using and becoming dependent on online and mobile banking services.

In this regard, the Central Bank expects firms to communicate clearly and promptly with affected customers when a technical incident occurs, including details of the impacted service, details of alternative access to services and an undertaking that identifiable loss will be remediated. The Central Bank has communicated their expectations to the banks. All impacted customers who are dissatisfied with the service offered to them by their bank are recommended to formally register their dissatisfaction by making a complaint with the bank in question.

If a consumer is not satisfied with the outcome of their complaint lodged with the Bank they may refer the matter to the Financial Services and Pensions Ombudsman to have it independently investigated. Investigations by the Financial Services and Pensions Ombudsman are free of charge to the customer.

**Tracker Mortgage Examination Data**

93. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the exact nature of the 4,000 new cases in the Central Bank’s April 2018 update on the tracker scandal; the new groups that have been included; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18885/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The Central Bank has advised that, as set out in its recently published April 2018 Tracker Mortgage Examination Progress Report, the total number of impacted customers identified through the Examination to end-March 2018 is c. 30,000 (of which 1,500 remain to be verified by lenders) and that this represents an increase of 3,400 identified customer accounts since the December report. (When added to the c. 7,100 cases resolved outside of the Examination, this brings the total number of customer accounts affected by tracker mortgage-related issues at end-March 2018 to 37,100). The Central Bank also advises that this increase is principally the result of verification of total numbers reported by lenders previously (as unverified estimates), as well as a small number of customer accounts newly identified by lenders.

Intensive review and challenge by the Central Bank has continued since the December report, and this remains ongoing. It should be noted that verification work by lenders, and review and challenge by the Central Bank, may lead to some further increase in the number of affected customers before conclusion of the Examination. The Central Bank has and will continue to challenge lenders in relation to various strands of the Examination until it is satisfied that all affected customers are identified and that lenders have carried out the Examination in accordance with the Framework set down by the Central Bank.

Due to statutory confidentially requirements, the Central Bank has advised that it is not in a position to comment on its supervisory engagement with individual firms and that, generally speaking, it can only disclose supervisory information in summary or aggregate form so that
individual firms cannot be identified.

**Financial Services Regulation**

94. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the amount transferred to parent companies outside Ireland that is classified within management expenses by participants in the insurance market here, specifically non-life insurance in each of the years 2013 to 2017, in tabular form, based on the data gathered by the Central Bank; the percentage of the entire amount of management fees in the non-life insurance market that is transferred to parent companies outside Ireland; his views on whether the companies are shifting profits outside of Ireland by using the management expenses classification; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18968/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** In my role as Minister for Finance, I am responsible for the development of the legal framework governing financial regulation. Consequently my Department has no role in collecting the information being sought by the Deputy.

In order to address the questions posed, my officials contacted the Central Bank of Ireland on this matter. The Central Bank advised that the information collected from companies does not identify separately payments made to or received from other group companies. Therefore the breakdown being sought by the Deputy is not available.

With regard to views on whether insurers are shifting profits outside of Ireland by using the management expenses classification, the Central Bank has informed me that it is not evident that there is any material transfer of profits via management expenses to parent companies. It does acknowledge however that in some instances, an Irish insurer may receive services from its group, which it pays for.

**Financial Services Regulation**

95. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the requirements imposed on financial institutions in respect of maintaining a record of politically exposed persons; the reason customers opening accounts are asked a question regarding the issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19016/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** As the Deputy will be aware financial institutions are designated persons under the Criminal Justice (Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing) Act 2010 (“the Act”) and are obliged to comply with the regulatory obligations contained under Part 4.

Section 37 of the Act obliges designated persons to take steps to determine whether a customer, or a beneficial owner connected with the customer or service concerned, residing outside the State, is a politically exposed person or an immediate family member, or a close associate of, a politically exposed person.

A “politically exposed person” (“PEP”) is defined as an individual who is entrusted with a prominent public function, including a specified official and a member of the administrative, management or supervisory body of a state-owned enterprise and includes a “close associate” and an “immediate family member” under the Act.

Under AML legislation, a designated person is obliged to take steps prior to establishing a business relationship with the customer or when carrying out an occasional transaction with,
for or on behalf of the customer or assisting the customer to carry out an occasional transaction. The steps to be taken are such steps as are reasonably warranted by the risk that the customer or beneficial owner is involved in money laundering or terrorist financing.

Where a designated person has knowledge of or reasonable grounds to believe that a customer is a PEP, or is an immediate family member or a close associate of the PEP, a designated person is obliged to apply the following measures:

(1) obtain approval from senior management prior to the establishment of a business relationship with the customer; and

(2) determine the source of wealth and the source of funds related to transactions and services provided.

A designated person that cannot fulfil its obligations in respect of its obligations should not carry on a business relationship or provide services to a customer or beneficial owner as provided for in the Act.

It is a criminal offence for a designated person to not comply with its obligations pursuant to section 37.

It is also worth noting that the categories of individuals regarded as Politically Exposed Persons (PEPs) has been broadened under the EU’s Fourth Anti-Money Laundering Directive (4AMLD) to include domestic PEPs. Those elements of 4AMLD will be transposed into domestic legislation in due course by my colleague the Minister for Justice and Equality. This will mean that domestic PEPs will be in scope for enhanced due diligence measures. This will be a significant departure from the Act where currently only foreign PEPs are subject to enhanced due diligence measures from designated persons.

**Tax Agreements**

96. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Finance his views on a double taxation anomaly whereby a UK resident pays tax on the income from a property in Ireland in both jurisdictions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19021/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I am advised by Revenue that section 18 Taxes Consolidation Act 1997 provides that an individual who is not resident and not ordinarily resident in Ireland, is in general, liable to Irish tax only on income arising in Ireland. Rent arising from a property situated in Ireland is considered Irish source income and is therefore within the charge to Irish income tax notwithstanding that the individual is tax resident in the UK.

Relief for double taxation is provided for under the terms of the Ireland/UK Double Taxation Agreement. Article 7 of this agreement grants taxing rights to Ireland in respect of income from immovable property. Therefore, under the terms of this agreement, Ireland may tax this income notwithstanding that it is also taxed in the UK.

In general, the country in which an individual is considered a resident of for the purposes of the Ireland/UK treaty will grant relief for any element of double taxation. On the basis that the individual is a resident of the UK, the question of relief for Irish tax paid is a matter for the UK tax authorities. Any credit for Irish tax which is allowed in the UK cannot exceed the UK tax due on that same income.
97. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the number of insurance companies providing pet insurance; the annual revenue in 2017 obtained from pet insurance based on data obtained from the Central Bank; his views on whether there is a concentration in the market in view of the fact that more families are obtaining pet insurance; if his attention has been drawn to the practice whereby a claim made on a condition in a particular year will render it uninsurable in future years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19061/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** At the outset, you should note that I am advised by the Central Bank of Ireland that pet insurance is not a defined insurance class, of its own, under the European Union (Insurance and Reinsurance) Regulations 2015 and it is therefore not possible to determine which firms provide this type of insurance, nor the levels of revenue obtained from such insurance. However, notwithstanding this, my officials have been in contact with Insurance Ireland in respect of this matter and were informed that Insurance Ireland is aware of four providers for this type of insurance at present.

In relation to the issue of whether a claim made on a condition in a particular year will render it uninsurable in future years, it is important to be aware that 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.

My understanding is that when making their individual decisions on whether to offer pet insurance cover and what terms to apply, insurers, as with any other type of non-life product, use a combination of rating factors. Such factors include the relevant claims record, and the insurer’s own past claims experience generally.

**Vehicle Registration Data**

98. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the number of cars registered here in each of the past four years and to date in 2018; the number of those registrations that were pre-registered, that is, the dealer will register a car in advance of it being sold; his views on whether this has the potential to distort the figures on the number of cars sold each year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19062/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I am advised by Revenue that the number of new and used cars registered for Vehicle Registration Tax for the years 2014 to 2017 and the first three months of 2018 are shown in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gross cars registered for VRT</th>
<th>New Cars</th>
<th>Used Cars</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>96,630</td>
<td>54,471</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>125,211</td>
<td>48,398</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>146,806</td>
<td>72,718</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>131,683</td>
<td>94,456</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018 (3 Months to end March)</td>
<td>72,065</td>
<td>26,304</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I am informed by Revenue that vehicle registrations are carried out by motor dealers either
through Revenue’s on-line system, ROS, or through the National Car Testing (NCT) Centre network. When a vehicle is being registered, the requirement is to declare the vehicle particulars in order for Revenue to provide authorisation for entry-into-service of the vehicle. There is no requirement to declare the conditions of sale or whether the vehicle is being registered by a dealer in advance of a sale.

I am further informed by Revenue that a system of “pre-inspection” of vehicles is operated through the NCT Centres. This system was introduced by Revenue to provide an alternative to motor dealers having to attend the NCT Centres. Using this system, an authorised motor dealer can have a vehicle or a number of vehicles pre-inspected in advance of sale. Where a sale is subsequently made, the dealer can register the vehicle directly through ROS without having to go to the NCT Centre. These pre-inspections are not registrations and are processed internally in Revenue for accounting purposes but are not reflected in the annual registration statistics.

I am advised by Revenue that registration statistics reflect the number of vehicles registered each year and are not intended to represent an accurate number of vehicles sold each year, whether by direct sale to a customer or another form of transaction in advance of sale.

**Financial Services Regulation**

99. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Finance his plans to regulate PCP finance packages particularly in the car loan finance sector. [19067/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** As the Deputy will be aware Personal Contract Plans (PCP) are a form of Hire Purchase and both the Central Bank and the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (CCPC) have certain functions and legal powers in relation to the provision of hire-purchase agreements. In the State PCP finance is underwritten by standard financial institutions, manufacturer banks, and special purpose institutions which exclusively offer motor finance.

The Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (CCPC) undertook the first comprehensive study of the Personal Contract Plans (PCP) market in the State. As part of its study the CCPC issued detailed questionnaires to all the financial institutions that underwrite PCP finance in the State. This allowed the CCPC to compile, for the first time, primary data relating to the number and value of PCP finance contracts issued. The report was published on the 6 March 2018 and is available at www.ccpc.ie.

The Deputy may also be aware that an Economic Letter on this area was published by the Central Bank on 28 March. This provides further comprehensive data on the PCP market in Ireland, where at the end 2017 PCP finance accounted for 43% ($1.2 billion) of car-related bank debt. The Economic Letter is available at www.centralbank.ie.

My officials will examine these publications and give careful consideration to what actions, if any, would be appropriate.

On the issue more generally, the Central Bank regulates financial services institutions as set out under legislation but does not regulate individual financial products. Under current legislation (Consumer Credit Act 1995), the CCPC has responsibility for authorising and supervising the credit intermediaries which typically sell PCP contracts to consumers, including garages and retailers. The CCPC provides licenses to credit intermediaries and keeps an online list of credit intermediaries holding a valid authorisation which is available on the CCPC website www.ccpc.ie.
The CCPC also deals with complaints about the advertising of Credit Agreements, issuing Pawnbrokers licenses and the advertising of car finance on credit intermediary websites and in the media. The CCPC’s remit is limited to authorisation, as opposed to having a regulatory role for PCPs. It also has a specific statutory remit to provide personal finance information and education to assist consumers.

My Department continues to keep financial legislation relating to consumer protection under review to ensure consumers are protected. However, the Consumer Credit Act 1995 and the CCPC itself both come under the aegis of my colleague the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation.

Stamp Duty

100. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the stamp duty received in each month from January to March 2018 against the budgeted intake for those months by agricultural property, commercial property, residential property and other properties based on the Fiscal Monitor for March 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19081/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I am advised by Revenue that the breakdown of Stamp Duty receipts by property category as requested by the Deputy is not available. The available information is the estimated net receipts of Stamp Duty associated with all property for January to March 2018 and the equivalent net receipts for January to March 2017.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>2017 Stamp Duty on Property Net Receipts €m</th>
<th>2018 Stamp Duty on Property Net Receipts €m</th>
<th>2018 Stamp Duty on Property Target €m</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pre-Budget 2018 estimates of potential Stamp Duty yield were based on a projection forward of receipts in the previous years.

Receipts of Stamp Duty on property vary by month, as borne out by collection data in previous years. While Stamp Duty receipts from property are below forecast to date in 2018, the projection is for the full year and given the nature and timing of property receipts, it is too early to reach any conclusion regarding full year collection.

Universal Social Charge Review

101. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Finance the progress of the working group on the future of PRSI and the USC in respect of contribution rates and ensuring contribution classes are actuarially reviewed on an annual basis to determine the changes required to fund benchmarked increases in State pension payment rates or expansion of benefits cover; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19123/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** Following a commitment I made in Budget 2018, an inter-Departmental Working Group has been established to examine and report on options for the amalgamation of USC and PRSI. The Group’s Terms of Reference are as follows:
Questions - Written Answers

“To examine and present options for the amalgamation of PRSI and USC in a manner which seeks to address, inter alia:

(i) the need to preserve the tax base having regard to the need for certainty, equity, and ease of compliance and administration,
(ii) current and future funding challenges facing the Social Insurance Fund,
(iii) issues likely to arise from a phased implementation over a number of years of the new instrument,
(iv) simplification of the personal tax and social insurance systems, and
(v) any other relevant matters arising.

The exercise will be chaired by the Department of Finance. It should have regard to the structure and rates of personal tax and social insurance in other countries and the macroeconomic and demographic contexts in Ireland, and should be completed no later than 30 June 2018.”

In addition to the Department of Finance, the Working Group is comprised of representatives from the Department of the Taoiseach, the Department of Public Expenditure & Reform, the Department of Employment Affairs & Social Protection, the Revenue Commissioners and an external expert, Dr. Micheál Collins.

The Working Group has been holding regular meetings and I understand that work is progressing as per the Group’s mandate in its Terms of Reference.

Flood Relief Schemes Payments

102. Deputy Noel Grealish asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the procedure for calculating the amount of compensation due to landowners in the event that part of their land has to be taken over by the Office of Public Works for the purpose of carrying out flood alleviation measures; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18788/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran): Compensation claims in respect of flood relief schemes carried out by the Office of Public Works arise in situations where a person’s property interest suffers losses or damages arising from interference with that property in the execution of such schemes under the Arterial Drainage Acts.

Although in almost all situations land is not acquired, the compensation provisions follow the compulsory purchase code as provided for under the Land Clauses Consolidation Act, 1845 and the Acquisition of Land (Assessment of Compensation) Act, 1919 as modified by the Arterial Drainage Acts, 1945 and 1995 and clarified by case law.

Almost all cases are agreed amicably following negotiation. However, where no agreement can be reached, the above Acts provide for referral of the disputed claim by either party to an independent and binding arbitration process.

Compensation entitlement follows a “Principle of Equivalence” so that a prudent claimant is placed in the same position financially after the scheme as they were before it. Compensation is generally addressed under the following headings:
a. Land loss
b. Severance
c. Injurious affection
d. Disturbance
e. Benefit (Section 17 of The Arterial Drainage Act, 1945 obliges the arbitrator to have regard to any benefit to any property of the person claiming compensation)

The assessment of compensation under the above headings can be complex and claimants are entitled to reasonable and allowable professional costs in processing a claim.

**Community Employment Schemes Supervisors**

103. **Deputy Fiona O’Loughlin** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if a date has been set for a meeting of the high-level forum on community employment supervisor pensions; if his attention has been drawn to the anger and frustration of community employment supervisors and assistant supervisors; his views on the fact that their contribution to improving the life chances of scheme participants and to their overall local communities is not being properly recognised at the end of their careers in spite of a Labour Court ruling in their favour; his further views on whether the Government may be undermining the Labour Court by ignoring its recommendation; and the steps he will take to resolve the matter. [18580/18]

109. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if a date has been set for a meeting of the high-level forum on community employment supervisors pensions in view of the urgent need for a resolution of this matter in line with the recommendation of the Labour Court; if a meeting date has been set; when this matter will come to a conclusion; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18671/18]

110. **Deputy Carol Nolan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if a date has been set for a meeting of the high-level forum on community employment supervisor pensions; if his attention has been drawn to the anger and frustration of community employment supervisors and assistant supervisors; his views on the fact that their contribution to improving the life chances of scheme participants and to their overall local communities is not being properly recognised at the end of their careers in spite of a Labour Court ruling in their favour; his further views on whether the Government may be undermining the Labour Court by ignoring its recommendation; and the steps he will take to resolve the matter. [18716/18]

111. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if a date has been set for a meeting of the high-level forum on community employment supervisor pensions; if his attention has been drawn to the anger and frustration of supervisors and assistant supervisors; his views on the fact their contribution to improving the life chances of scheme participants and to their overall local communities is not been properly recognised at the end of their careers in spite of a Labour Court ruling in their favour; his further views on whether the Government may be undermining the Labour Court by ignoring its recommendation; and the steps he will take to bring a resolution to the matter. [18736/18]

120. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the steps he is taking to address the issue of pension provision for community employment supervisors and assistant supervisors; his plans to implement the Labour Court’s recommendations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19127/18]
Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 103, 109 to 111, inclusive, and 120 together.

I would refer the Deputy to my response to PQ 54985/17 of 16 January 2018 and PQ 13684/18 of 27 March 2018.

Public Sector Staff Sick Leave

104. Deputy Catherine Murphy asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the length of time antenatal leave or absence from work remains on a person’s personnel record if she is employed within the public service and-or Civil Service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18611/18]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): This response sets out the position in relation to pregnancy related sick leave and antenatal leave.

The full terms of the Public Service Sick Leave Scheme are set out in Appendix A.

The need to protect women during pregnancy and ensure that they are not discriminated against is reflected in the design of the sick leave scheme. The following extra protections are given to a female worker in respect of pregnancy related illnesses:

(i) An employee who is absent for a pregnancy related illness will receive a minimum of half pay during the pregnancy related illness, regardless of whether she has exhausted her ordinary entitlement to paid sick leave. This means that a female employee will not be taken off pay while on pregnancy related sick leave.

(ii) Any pregnancy related sick leave taken at the half rate of pay will not be taken into account in calculating entitlement to ordinary sick leave after the pregnancy.

(iii) The Critical Illness Protocol, which allows for an extended paid sick leave provides specifically for pregnancy-related illness. Where a pregnancy related illness is serious it will be covered by the CIP. One of the criteria for awarding of CIP more generally is 10 consecutive days of hospitalisation, however, this requirement is reduced to 2 days for pregnancy related illness in accordance with Labour Court recommendation (ref: LCR 20667).

In these ways, the Public Service Management (Sick Leave) Regulations, S.I. 124 of 2014 recognise the distinct position of the pregnant worker and make provision for the protection of the health and welfare of such workers. The Regulations implement the principles of European law in relation to non-discrimination against pregnant workers.

The sick leave record of an individual needs to be kept for a minimum of four years as access to paid sick leave is determined on the basis of how much sick leave a person has taken over the previous four years.

Appendix A

Public Service Sick Leave Scheme

The new Public Service Sick Leave Scheme came into effect from 31st March 2014 for the generality of the Public Service.

The new provisions allow staff access to the following paid sick leave:

- maximum of 92 days on full pay in a rolling one year period;
- followed by a maximum of 91 days on half pay in a rolling one year period;
- subject to a maximum of 183 days paid sick leave in a rolling four year period.

**Temporary Rehabilitation Remuneration**

Temporary Rehabilitation Remuneration (TRR - previously Pension Rate of Pay) can be granted where an individual has exhausted the limits for sick pay provided there is a realistic prospect of that person returning to work. The maximum period for which TRR can be paid is 547 days under ordinary sick leave arrangements.

**Critical Illness Protocol**

In addition, in order to provide support for public service employees the new Critical Illness Protocol (CIP) was put in place as part the scheme. This allows an employee, who suffers a critical illness or serious physical injury, access to 12 months of paid sick leave on the same basis as the previous sick leave scheme (i.e. 183 days on full pay in a rolling one year period, followed by 182 days on half pay subject to a maximum of 365 days in a rolling four year period). In such cases TRR is for also available for 12 months with a further possibility of 2 years depending on the severity of the illness.

**Public Sector Staff Sick Leave**

105. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform his views on whether antenatal appointments should be categorised as certified sick leave or as standard sick leave in respect of persons employed in the public sector and-or Civil Service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18612/18]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** As Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, I have overarching responsibility for the Public Service. However, the arrangements for antenatal appointments in sectors other than the Civil Service are a matter for the relevant Minister.

In the Civil Service, pregnant staff are entitled to such paid time off as is necessary for attendance at antenatal clinics. Such time off is not categorised as sick leave of any type.

**State Properties Data**

106. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform further to Parliamentary Question No. 313 of 17 April 2018, the number of sites and suitable acreage for residential construction by county and by owner, that is, local authority, State body, semi-State body, the OPW and central government; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18621/18]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** In relation to the properties held by the Commissioners of Public Works for which I have responsibility, I refer you to the recent PQ 55217/17 answered on 16th January 2018 for details of vacant properties and sites. In the case of other sectors, each State body is responsible for responding to requests for information on the property, they hold.

I also refer the Deputy to the Question asked of the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government on this issue on today’s Order Paper.
107. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the Government contracts awarded to a company (details supplied) in each year since March 2011, in tabular form; the costs per contract; the Department, agency or body involved; the basis for each contract; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18637/18]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform has no current contracts with the company in question.

The following table sets out details of previous contracts the Department had with the company and details of a relevant Office of Government Procurement framework.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Purpose of Contract</th>
<th>Type of Contract</th>
<th>Value of Contract</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (National Shared Services Office)</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Provision of Business Architect and Deployment Lead roles on the Financial Management Shared Service Project</td>
<td>Service Supply</td>
<td>€173,550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Public Expenditure and Reform</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>External advice sought to assess the costs, benefits, risks and implications associated to the component elements of the new shared model to deliver L&amp;D to the Civil Service, and to compile a business case outlining the findings</td>
<td>Service Supply</td>
<td>€106,063</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Office of Government Procurement)</td>
<td></td>
<td>The Office of Government Procurement (OGP) has established six framework agreements that include the company named by the Deputy as a member. These frameworks are for the provision of Professional Services, ICT and Managed Services. To date, seven contracts have been awarded to this named company following direct invitation to tender to the members of these frameworks. These contracts were put in place on behalf of other public service contracting authorities. My Department has not signed a contract for provision of services with this company. The administration of the contract once awarded is a matter for each contracting authority and contract details are held by the individual authority concerned.</td>
<td>Service Supply</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Public Procurement Regulations**

108. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if consideration is being given to reducing the turnover requirements for public tenders to ensure that smaller suppliers of goods and services are not unnecessarily precluded from tendering for
projects, to encourage more competition and to allow local companies bid for contracts in their own area, particularly in rural Ireland; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18670/18]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The assessment of a tenderer’s financial and economic standing is a key part of any procurement process. Establishing the appropriate suitability criteria that are relevant and appropriate to a particular contract is, of course, a matter for the contracting authority concerned. This is because the contracting authority is in the best position to gauge the appropriate levels of financial capacity that are appropriate to the needs of that specific contract. Therefore, there are no centrally imposed requirements for a minimum turnover. Such requirements must logically be developed on a case by case basis with reference to the specific needs of the contract, balancing the risk of contractors failing to perform the contract with encouraging more competition.

However, the Government recognises that the small and medium enterprise (SME) sector is very important to the economy and that public procurement can be a source of business for SMEs. In this regard, Government Policy, as set out in Circular 10/14: Initiatives to assist SMEs in Public Procurement issued by my Department, is aimed at facilitating greater participation of SMEs in public procurement opportunities. In relation to suitability criteria, the circular stresses that public bodies must ensure that any criteria/turnover levels set by them should be both justifiable and proportionate to the needs of the contract and, a matter of general policy, should not for routine goods and services competitions set company turnover requirements at more than twice the estimated contract value.

The Office of Government Procurement through its engagement with public bodies and SME representative bodies is ensuring that this message continues to be highlighted.

Questions Nos. 109 to 111, inclusive, answered with Question No. 103.

Public Private Partnerships Data

112. Deputy John Lahart asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the details of the PPP projects in the water sector; the cost of each; and his plans to begin posting these details on the Government’s PPP website in the interests of greater transparency as recommended by the Oireachtas Committee on Budgetary Oversight. [18758/18]

113. Deputy John Lahart asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the estimates of PPP expenditure in the context of multi-annual capital allocations in respect of the period 2018 to 2021 (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18759/18]

115. Deputy John Lahart asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the reason the major PPPs in the water sector are not included on the Government’s PPP website; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18777/18]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 112, 113 and 115 together.

A Public Private Partnership (PPP) is an arrangement between the public and private sector for the purpose of delivering infrastructure or services which were traditionally provided by the public service. In effect, it is a form of procurement available to the public sector.

There are a number of different PPP models which can be used, including:

1. Projects financed by the private sector and remunerated by deferred annual payments
(Unitary or Availability Payments) from the Exchequer e.g., Design, Build, Operate & Finance (DBOF); or Design, Build, Operate, Maintain and Finance (DBOMF);

2. Projects partly or fully financed by the private sector and remunerated by user charges, mainly in the roads area (DBOF with a Concession to levy user charges for a period); and

3. Projects funded from State Authorities own resources, mainly in the local authority area (e.g., Design, Build & Operate/Maintain).

When referring to PPPs, we generally mean projects in category (a) or (b) above, whereby the asset is funded and constructed by the private partner, following which it is made available for public use and is paid for by the State and/or users over an extended period (typically 20-25 years), after which the asset comes into State ownership. In the meantime, the PPP is regarded as ‘off balance sheet’ from a General Government perspective, which means that the initial capital cost of the project does not impact on the General Government Balance (GGB) over the construction period, nor does the debt associated with the project impact on General Government Debt (GGD). Rather, the cost of such projects is spread over the lifetime of the projects, by way of annual unitary payments.

These are the projects that are reported on annually by my Department on the ppp.gov.ie website - on the basis that these are the PPP projects which have not been recorded on the balance sheet of the Government and so constitute a future contingent liability for the State. Such contingent liabilities pose a potential risk for the Exchequer, in terms of a potential future GGB/GGD impact were they to be terminated and surrendered to the Exchequer earlier than anticipated, thus requiring a reclassification as on-balance sheet at that time. For this reason, these contingent liabilities must be reported to Eurostat, via the Central Statistics Office, on an annual basis. Accordingly, it is appropriate that such contingent liabilities associated with PPPs be carefully monitored and reported on.

On the other hand, the projects pursued under category (c) above have been fully funded by the Exchequer and are already classified as on-balance sheet in General Government terms. Such projects are not generally regarded as ‘classic’ PPPs and there are no contingent liabilities associated with them as there is no risk of a potential future GGB or GGD impact associated with such projects, since they are already on-balance sheet (unlike ‘classic’ PPPs). On this basis, we do not record these projects on the PPP.gov.ie website, nor do I propose to change this approach.

Since 1 January 2014, Irish Water now has statutory responsibility for all aspects of water services planning, delivery and operation at national, regional and local levels, and this included taking on responsibility for the water related ‘PPPs’ from the local authorities. Details of the PPP projects in the water area would therefore be available from Irish Water.

In relation to the PPP related expenditure that is provided for in the context of the multi-annual capital allocations now agreed for the period 2018 to 2022, my Department is in the process of producing a detailed breakdown of this information to be published soon.

Chapter 6 of the NDP included a section on the PPP review which stated that, in order to improve transparency in reporting on PPPs, a number of changes in the reporting arrangements for PPPs were recommended by the Review Group. One of the improvements in reporting being introduced on foot of these recommendations is that the table published by my Department on the ppp.gov.ie website will, in future, include details of the PPP unitary payment charges for each individual project by year, until such time as the project is handed back by the PPP Company to the Sponsoring Authority. Officials in my Department are currently compiling the required data in conjunction with the responsible Departments and it is expected that the new
reporting arrangement will be in place and the data published on the PPP website soon.

These new arrangements will address the suggestion of the Parliamentary Budget Office that future PPP commitments be disaggregated and that clarity be provided on the amount of the total capital allocations for 2018-2021 that will be required to fund such commitments - but in respect of all future years and not just the period 2018-2021.

Public Private Partnerships Cost

114. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the PPP contracts that account for an increase in PPP liability from €6 billion in 2013 to €9.6 billion in 2016; and the details of increased PPP liabilities since 2016. [18763/18]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** My Department’s role in relation to Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) is to maintain and develop the general policy framework (including, where necessary, the legal framework) within which PPPs operate. It also provides central guidance to other Departments and State Authorities in that context. My Department has no direct involvement in the procurement or delivery of individual PPP projects.

A summary update on PPP projects is available at the website [www.ppp.gov.ie](http://www.ppp.gov.ie). A copy of the updated table is set out as follows for the Deputy’s information. The table summarises information on PPP projects across the public sector indicating for each project, the value of the contract, the operational date of the project and the name of the company to which the contract was awarded.

The Deputy should note that the table is intended to provide indicative information in relation to PPP projects generally, based on information provided to my Department by the relevant responsible Departments/Agencies. The Central PPP Policy Unit in my Department endeavours to ensure that the information is as accurate as possible but details on specific projects should be confirmed with the State authorities responsible for those projects.

As the Deputy will see from the details supplied in the table, there have been a number of additional PPP projects where contracts have been signed since 2013, such as the Primary Care Bundle, the Courts Bundle, Schools Bundle 4 and 5 and a number of roads projects, which account for the increase in liabilities arising from PPPs since 2013.

This Table is currently in the process of being updated to reflect the position as at end-2017, which will be published on the website as soon as possible.

**Exchequer funded financial commitments under Public Private Partnerships and Concession Projects**
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<th>Project Classification</th>
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<th>Projected Future PPP Unitary Payments in NOMINAL Terms (€,m)</th>
<th>Other PPP Payments, where available (€,m)</th>
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<td>6,564.5</td>
<td>421.3</td>
<td>9,635.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Education figures to be validated

**Figures include a provision for a VAT bullet payment when due.

[1] The Payments for Limerick Tunnel include payments required to be made under the traffic guarantee contract mechanism. The nominal value of remaining payments as at 31 December 2015 does not include any amounts for future payments under this mechanism.

[2] The Payments for M3 Clonee Kells include payments required to be made under the traffic guarantee contract mechanism. The nominal value of remaining payments as at 31 December 2015 does not include any amounts for future payments under this mechanism.

Notes

1. Estimates of future nominal committed payments are calculated on an assumed future annual inflation of 2 per cent per annum.

2. PPP Unitary expenditure by TII relates to construction, operation and availability payments.

3. Other PPP expenditure relates to VAT, rates, enabling works, authority variations etc.

4. A review of “Other PPP Payments” is currently being undertaken by the Dept. of Education and figures will be provided following completion of the review. Total PPP cost figures are also subject to change in that context.

5. Rounding affects totals.

*Question No. 115 answered with Question No. 112.*

### Minor Flood Mitigation Works and Coastal Protection Scheme Applications

116. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if the Office of Public Works will provide funds for coastal protection works in Leenane, County Galway, on foot of an application from Galway County Council for funding of such works;
when a decision will be made on the application; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18932/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran): I have been advised by the Office of Public Works that the application submitted under its Minor Flood Mitigation Works and Coastal Protection scheme by Galway County Council for flood relief works at Leenane Village is currently under consideration and the Council will be notified shortly.

Disability Act Employment Targets

117. Deputy Robert Troy asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the percentage of new temporary clerical officer posts (details supplied) in the Civil Service that will be for persons with disabilities; and if persons included in the WAM programme will be considered as part of this. [18934/18]

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

Public service bodies are also subject to specific legal obligations in the Disability Act 2005, including the requirement for public bodies to:

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

As the Deputy will be aware, the Comprehensive Employment Strategy for people with disabilities was agreed by the Government in 2015. It proposes to increase the public sector target of 3% employment of people with disabilities to 6% by 2024.

You may also wish to note that a number of Departments and Offices in the Civil Service are participants in the Willing Able and Mentoring (WAM) Programme, which is a mentored work placement programme aimed at offering graduates with disabilities up to six months paid work experience. It is organised by the Association for Higher Education Access and Disability (AHEAD). The Civil Service has been participating in the programme since 2006.

WAM participants past and present can apply for positions advertised by the Public Appointments Service, including the Temporary Clerical Officer competition.

Proposed Legislation

118. Deputy John Brady asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform when the public service superannuation (miscellaneous provisions) (amendment) Bill will be published;
the committee in which will the Bill will be discussed for pre-legislative scrutiny; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19084/18]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** As the Deputy is aware, the Government agreed on 5 December 2017 that the compulsory retirement age of most public servants recruited before 1 April 2004 should be increased to age 70. The Attorney General’s Office has been asked to prioritise the drafting of the necessary legislation so that the new compulsory retirement age will become effective as soon as possible. The drafting process is under way and the Bill is on the list of priority legislation for publication in the Oireachtas Spring/Summer Session 2018.

I wrote to the Joint Committee on Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform earlier in the year requesting them to undertake pre-legislative scrutiny on the General Scheme of the Bill at an early date. The Committee in response has indicated that, while they do not intend to undertake pre-legislative scrutiny on this Bill, they will engage fully on the draft legislation in the context of the formal legislative process. This approach is likely to facilitate passage of the Bill through the Oireachtas and I welcome the support of the Committee in this regard.

**Community Employment Schemes Supervisors**

119. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if the high level forum set up to deal with the issue of pension provision for the supervisors and assistant supervisors of community employment schemes has met since its last meeting in November 2017; if so, if a report from the meeting will be provided; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19126/18]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The most recent meeting of the Community Sector Forum took place on 23 November 2017. Previous meetings took place on 24 February 2017 and 7 April 2017. It remains the position that the minutes of these meetings await formal approval by the parties to the Forum and will on such approval be publicly available on my Department’s website.

*Question No. 120 answered with Question No. 103.*

**Youth Guarantee**

121. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the amount drawn down to date of the Youth Guarantee funding from the EU. [18804/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan):** The Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) is one of the main EU financial resources to support the implementation of the EU Youth Guarantee. It is integrated into European Social Fund (ESF) programming as a dedicated priority axis within the ESF Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning 2014-2020 (PEIL). The specific YEI allocation for Ireland of €68m is matched by equal amounts from our ESF allocation and from the Exchequer, giving an overall allocation of €204m.

All ESF activities, including YEI activities, are fully funded up-front by the Exchequer with the EU (ESF/YEI) funding being claimed in arrears. While no payment application has been made to date to the Commission under the PEIL, it is expected that the funding will be fully drawn down.
The ESF authorities must be designated in accordance with the EU regulations prior to making the first payment application. This designation is based on the opinion of the Independent Audit Body (IAB) which must be satisfied across a range of criteria that systems are in place to allow the ESF authorities to perform their required functions. These systems requirements include the provision of a computerised accounting and information system for EU funds to meet the 2014-2020 functionality requirements. The final phase of the IT system went live at the end of March 2018. The ESF authorities are engaging with the IAB and it is expected that designation will be completed in the coming weeks.

Preparations are underway for the submission of a first payment application to the Commission in Q3 2018. The European Commission has advised that the potential decommitment at end 2018 is €127.7m, if not claimed in payment applications in the meantime. The ESF authorities will ensure that sufficient payment applications are submitted to fully drawdown the EU funding allocations.

Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme

122. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the entitlements of persons qualifying for the long-term illness scheme; if provision will be made for persons within this category who do not receive a social welfare payment to be included in vocational training opportunities and employment schemes; if persons qualifying under the scheme can be deemed eligible for workplace programmes and training courses even if they do not receive a social welfare payment; if this scheme will be reviewed with the objective of making other supports available for persons within this category; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18878/18]

158. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if provision will be made for long-term illness scheme recipients to be deemed eligible for workplace programmes and training courses even if they do not receive a social welfare payment; if this scheme will be reviewed with the objective of making other training supports available for persons within this category; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18879/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 122 and 158 together.

I understand the Deputy’s inquiry relates to recipients of the illness benefit scheme administered by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection. Decisions in relation to referrals to participate on training programmes are made by that Department. Typically for training programmes aimed at equipping people to take up employment, priority is given to those who are available for work. Pathways to Work 2016–2020 also includes specific actions to increase labour market participation and employment progression of people who are not currently active in the labour market and to apply the concept of active inclusion as a guiding principle, particularly in the period from 2018 – 2020.

Summer Works Scheme

123. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when a school (details supplied) will be notified of a decision on its application for the summer works scheme which was submitted in 2015; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18549/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The Summer Works
Scheme is designed to allow schools to carry out small and medium scale building works that will improve and upgrade existing school buildings. This scheme is additional to other capital funding schemes that are operated by the Department such as the additional accommodation scheme, Emergency Works scheme i.e. for projects of such urgency that they would prevent some or all of the school from opening, and Minor Works schemes.

The Summer Works Scheme (SWS) is a multi-annual Scheme. Over 1,650 schools, nearly 50% of schools, applied for inclusion under the current round of the scheme which reflects a very high demand.

To date, almost €80 million has been approved under the current round of the Scheme, in respect of 635 school projects, 464 primary and 171 post-primary schools, for Gas, electrical upgrades, mechanical, sanitation and roof improvement works. Details of the successful school applicants, are published on the Department’s website www.education.ie.

In relation to the Summer Works Scheme 2018, over €25 million will be spent on summer works projects in 2018. This expenditure will enable the remaining approved improvement works for 178 schools nationwide to be completed. These works will be carried out by the schools themselves on a devolved basis mainly over the summer months, so the disruption to students, teachers and other school staff will be kept to a minimum.

Furthermore, the Department intends to engage with the relevant education partners in relation to giving schools a better lead-in period for planning and delivering projects under the summer works scheme from 2019 onwards. While the Summer Works Scheme is hugely successful in enabling small scale refurbishment works to be done on a devolved basis, the Department considers that the operation of the scheme could be improved by providing a better lead-in period for schools rather than in Quarter 2 as in previous years. This will also help ensure that works done under the Summer Works Scheme fit better with any wider refurbishment/energy retrofit plans that may be done at schools under the increased funding provided in the National Development Plan. The engagement with education partners will commence shortly and will assist in developing a better timeline for the planning and delivery of summer works projects for 2019 onwards.

Special Educational Needs Service Provision

124. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the schools in County Dublin which have an ASD unit; the number of children attending each; the number of pupils awaiting access to an ASD unit in those and other schools, respectively; and his plans to address the shortfalls in available places for children with needs that can be catered for by an ASD unit. [18560/18]

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

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

The greater proportion of children with Autism attend mainstream classes, but some require the environment of a special class or special school. This decision is based on a recommendation contained within a professional assessment in consultation with the NCSE.
Students enrolling in specialised placements must have a report from a relevant professional or team of professionals stating that:

- S/he has a disability (in line with the designation of the special placement in question) and
- S/he has significant learning needs that require the support of a specialised setting and the reasons why this is the case.

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) is responsible for organising and planning provision for children with Special Educational Needs, including the establishment of special classes in mainstream primary and post primary schools.

Since 2011, the NCSE has increased the number of special classes from 548 in 2011 to 1,304 for the 2017/18 school year. 1,048 of these are ASD special classes.

125 special schools also provide specialist education for those students with complex special educational needs, including students diagnosed with ASD.

This reflects the priority which the Government has put on helping children with Special Educational Needs to achieve their potential.

With regard to Co. Dublin in particular, there are 37 special schools and 218 special classes attached to mainstream schools. Of these, 18 are ASD early intervention classes, 124 are primary ASD classes and 36 are post primary ASD classes. The number of ASD special classes in Co. Dublin have increased from 66 in 2011/2012 to 178 in 2017/2018.

The NCSE is aware of emerging need in Dublin from year to year, and where special provision, including special class provision, is required, it is planned and established to meet that need. This process is ongoing.

The NCSE has informed my Department that they intend to establish approx. 18 new ASD Special Classes in Co. Dublin for 2018/19 school year to meet currently identified need.

ASD special classes are resourced to cater for six pupils with complex educational needs arising from their diagnosis of autism and as such are staffed with a reduced PTR (6:1 Primary and 6:1.5 Post Primary) and two Special Needs Assistants. Details of all special classes for children with special educational needs are available on www.ncse.ie in county order.

The enrolment of a child to a school is a matter, in the first instance, for the parents of the child and the Board of Management of a school. My Department has no role in relation to processing applications for enrolment to schools and it does not maintain details of waiting lists in schools.

Where parents have been unsuccessful in enrolling their child in a school placement, for the 2018/19 school year, they should update their local SENO to inform the planning process. Contact details are available on www.ncse.ie.

In the case of all new schools, it is general practice to include a Special Needs Unit (SNU) in the accommodation brief for new school buildings, unless local circumstances indicate that it will not be required.

The NCSE will continue to work with schools, parents, NEPS, health professionals and other staff who are involved in the provision of services in the area referred to by the Deputy for children with special educational needs, to ensure that each child has a placement appropriate to their needs for the 2018/19 school year.
The Deputy may be aware that during the Committee Stage debate of the School Admissions Bill, I outlined my intention to include a provision that will provide, based on reports and advice from the NCSE, a power for the Minister to require a school to open a special class or increase the number of special classes in schools identified by the NCSE. My Department officials are currently engaging with the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel on the development of legislative proposals on this matter which they hope to bring forward to Government for approval.

**Schools Building Projects Status**

125. **Deputy Darragh O’Brien** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding progress on a permanent school building project for a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18562/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The major building project referred to by the Deputy is at an advanced stage of architectural planning Stage 2b (Detailed Design), which includes the application for statutory approvals and the preparation of tender documents. All statutory approvals have been secured.

The Design Team is currently completing the Stage 2b submission. Upon receipt and 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.

**Education Welfare Service Provision**

126. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the educational services that can be made available to a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18583/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The position is that the child in question may qualify for the Home Tuition grant scheme operated by my Department. This scheme is available where a child is temporarily without a school place and is actively seeking a school placement or may be taking an appeal under Section 29 of the Education Act 1998 following expulsion. Those who qualify for this grant scheme can employ a tutor to provide 9 hours home tuition per week. Details of this scheme are contained in circular 0051/2017 which is available on my Departments website at the following link: [https://www.education.ie/en/Parents/Services/Home-Tuition/](https://www.education.ie/en/Parents/Services/Home-Tuition/)

This scheme is operated with the assistance of the Educational Welfare Services of the Child and Family Agency. Application forms for this grant scheme are available from your local Educational Welfare Officer (EWO). Contact details for the EWO in your area can be obtained from the Educational Welfare Service, Child and Family Agency, Floors 2-5, Brunel Building, Heuston South Quarter, Dublin 8, phone 01-7718633.

**Physical Education Facilities**

127. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the name of each primary and secondary school in County Wexford that does not have a physical education hall; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18595/18]
Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I wish to advise the Deputy that my Department does not hold details relating to the information requested.

The Deputy will be aware that the Government will increase the funding provided for the school sector's capital investment programme. Under the National Development Plan, this funding allows for a continued focus on the provision of new permanent school places to keep pace with demographic demand and also provides for an additional focus on the refurbishment of existing school buildings to include the building and modernisation of PE facilities in primary and post-primary schools.

Residential Institutions

128. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the progress that has been made to organise meetings for groups of survivors of residential institutional abuse. [18603/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Following a meeting with survivors, I expressed a willingness to have a series of consultation meetings around the country, led by and for survivors of institutional abuse. The purpose of these meetings will be to enable survivors to reflect on their experiences, the State's response to the issue of institutional abuse and to make any recommendations they wish to make. The detail of how this can happen is being worked out and Department officials are in contact with survivors.

Special Educational Needs Service Provision

129. **Deputy Louise O’Reilly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the funding that has been allocated to schools in north County Dublin by catchment area for the provision of ASD units; the amount of this funding that has been drawn down by school; the amount each school will spend in the next five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18616/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): My Department’s policy is that children with special educational needs including those with autism, should be included in mainstream placements with additional supports provided, unless such a placement would not be in their best interests or in the interests of the children with whom they are to be educated, as is provided for under Section 2 of the Education of Persons with Special Needs Act 2004. The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) is responsible for approving special classes, including ASD classes.

With regard to Co. Dublin in particular, there are 37 special schools and 218 special classes attached to mainstream schools. Of these, 18 are ASD early intervention classes, 124 are primary ASD classes and 36 are post primary ASD classes. The number of ASD special classes in Co. Dublin have increased from 66 in 2011/2012 to 178 in 2017/2018.

Where the NCSE approves an ASD class in a mainstream school, it is open to the school in question to submit an application for additional accommodation to my Department should there be a deficit of accommodation in the school.

I also wish to advise the Deputy that it is general practice to include a Special Needs Unit (SNUs) in the accommodation brief for new school buildings, unless local circumstances indicate that it will not be required.

In this regard, the provision of such units may form part of the overall project brief that also
includes other accommodation for a school. Therefore, it is not possible to isolate the costs associated specifically for these units. Furthermore, given the site specific issues that may arise during the statutory process and construction stages it is not possible to specify the level of expenditure for the coming years.

I am pleased to advise the Deputy that my Department has set out on its website details of projects approved, including projects in North County Dublin, under the Additional School Accommodation Scheme at www.education.ie – Building Works.

Special Educational Needs Service Provision

130. Deputy Louise O’Reilly asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his attention has been drawn to the fact that the funding allocated to a school (details supplied) for the provision of an ASD unit has not been spent; the reason these funds have not been utilised; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18617/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): My Department provides for a range of placement options and supports for schools, which have enrolled students with special educational needs, in order to ensure that wherever a child is enrolled, s/he will have access to an appropriate education.

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

My Department therefore provides for a continuum of provision which includes mainstream school placements with additional supports, or for pupils who require more specialist interventions, special school and special class placements.

This network includes 130 ASD early intervention classes, 641 primary ASD classes and 277 post-primary ASD classes in mainstream schools and 125 Special Schools.

ASD Early Intervention classes are available for children aged 3-5 with a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Early intervention classes are intended to provide early support for children with ASD before they start school. Following early intervention, children will attend a mainstream class unless there is professional guidance that they require a special class or a placement in a special school.

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) which is an independent statutory body, plans and co-ordinates the provision of education and support services to children with special educational needs, in consultation with the relevant education partners and the Health Service Executive (HSE).

The NCSE is aware of emerging need in North Dublin, and where special provision, including special class provision, is required, it is planned and established to meet that need. This process is ongoing.

The school referred to by the Deputy includes a 2 classroom Special Needs Unit (SNU) in which it currently operates 2 ASD Early Intervention classes. The NCSE has informed my Department that they have agreed in principle to this school establishing additional Primary ASD Special Classes subject to accommodation being available. They have also advised that the school is in the process of submitting an application to my Department for capital funding to (i) re-configure existing spaces within the school building to accommodate the classes or (ii)
to construct additional accommodation.

My Department has also provided a new 2 classroom Special Needs Unit in Scoil Chormaic, CNS, Balbriggan. The NCSE are currently engaging with the school in relation to establishing ASD primary classes for the forthcoming school year.

The Education (Admission to Schools) Bill 2016 was published on 6 July 2016. During the Committee Stage debate of the School Admissions Bill, I outlined my intention to include a provision that will provide, based on reports and advice from the NCSE, a power for the Minister to require a school to open a special class or increase the number of special classes in schools identified by the NCSE.

My Department officials are currently engaging with the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel on the development of legislative proposals on this matter which they hope to bring forward to Government for approval.

The NCSE will continue to work with schools, parents, NEPS, health professionals and other staff who are involved in the provision of services in the areas referred to by the Deputy for children with special educational needs, to ensure that each child has a placement appropriate to their needs for the 2018/19 school year.

**Lansdowne Road Agreement**

131. **Deputy Mick Barry** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the rationale for backdating the restitution of the settlement reached between his Department and an organisation (details supplied) over past denial of appropriate incremental credit for persons working in Youthreach Resources to 1 June 2016 as opposed to full backdated restitution (details supplied). [18628/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** Throughout April and May 2016, discussions were held between my Department and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform with the Teachers’ Union of Ireland (TUI) in relation to issues of mutual concern in the context of the union’s co-operation with national collective agreements including the Lansdowne Road Agreement.

Arising from these discussions my Department addressed some general employment concerns of the TUI and gave a commitment to review certain identified matters, including the introduction of an incremental credit scheme for Youthreach Resource Persons and Coordinators.

On 30 May 2016, members of the TUI voted to accept the proposed agreement with my Department and to become party to the Lansdowne Road Agreement with effect from the 1st July 2016.

It is within this context that an incremental credit scheme for Youthreach Resource Persons and Coordinators has been introduced with effect from 1st July 2016.

**Education Fees**

132. **Deputy Brid Smith** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his attention has been drawn to a policy decision taken by the CDETB to raise fees for adults taking music lessons at a college (details supplied); if the increase in fees was sanctioned or approved by the committee for non-mainstream Department of Education and Skills funded music education;
his views on whether fee increases will drive adults away from access to such further education classes and is contrary to the stated purpose and policy of his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18629/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** In 2014, my Department established the ‘Committee for Non-Mainstream Department of Education and Skills funded Music Education’. The Committee was established to, inter alia, oversee the work of organisations in receipt of funding by the Department of Education and Skills in relation to non-mainstream music education.

In its engagement with organisations including CDETB, the Committee has suggested that emphasis of Department funded tuition should be focused on young individuals up to eighteen years, and also suggested that the Centre should focus on group tuition to allow more students overall to benefit from the service.

The decision to increase fees is an operational matter for which CDETB has responsibility. In view of this I have forwarded your query to the City of Dublin Education and Training Board for direct reply to you.

**Disability Act Employment Targets**

133. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Question No. 200 of 6 February 2018, the actions he has taken to ensure that the attention of employees of bodies under the aegis of his Department has been drawn to the fact that the completion of the staff census form is voluntary. [18646/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** Further to my response to parliamentary question 200 of 6 February 2018, I can confirm that officials in my Department have, in the context of this year’s iteration of the Part 5 process, written to all relevant aegis organisations and requested that they ensure that new and existing employees are aware that the completion of the staff census form on appointment or through the annual census process, is at all times voluntary.

**Schools Building Projects Status**

134. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason a school (details supplied) has had its proposed new build extension downsized; if other similar projects are being reduced in size as a result of the recent announcement of 42 new schools; and if so, the details of same. [18650/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** I wish to advise the Deputy that the school in question submitted a master plan containing details of how it envisaged the school developing in the future. The master plan would require significant capital funding to undertake a major extension and refurbishment of the existing school building. The school indicated that the proposed project would cater for future demographic growth in the area as well as providing additional specialist accommodation.

My Department liaised with the school in the context of the priority elements of the proposal. The school subsequently identified science labs as a priority element and submitted an application for capital grant. Following a visit to the school by my Department’s inspectorate, a devolved grant for two science labs was approved to the school for delivery.
At the time, my Department advised the school that we were in the process of carrying out a nationwide demographic review of all school planning areas, including the area in which the school is located to determine where future need for primary and post-primary school places across the county is required.

Arising from this review, the Deputy will be aware that my Department announced recently plans to establish 42 new schools over the next 4 years. The area where this school is located was one of the areas identified to establish a new post primary school in 2019. This new school will provide additional school capacity to meet demographic need in the area.

Following this announcement, my Department was in further contact with the school relating to the building project that has been approved. The school indicated that they will revert to the Department with additional information and this is awaited.

The Deputy will be aware that under the National Development Plan (NDP), increased funding has been provided for the school sector capital investment programme. This funding allows for a continued focus on the provision of new permanent school places to keep pace with demographic demand and also provides for an additional focus on the refurbishment of existing school buildings to include the building and modernisation of PE facilities in primary and post-primary schools.

**Teacher Data**

135. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of teachers who have retired since 2010; the number of teachers that have been recruited since 2010, by primary and second level in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18652/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** Details in regard to teacher retirements and teachers allocated are set out in Table 1 and Table 2. Data in relation to retirements pre-2012 are not held in the same format as for later years so have not been included as they are recorded by date of benefit processed rather than retirement date.

**Table 1 – Teacher Retirement 2012-2016**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Primary</th>
<th>Secondary &amp; C &amp; C schools</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>877</td>
<td>666</td>
<td>1,543</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>465</td>
<td>376</td>
<td>841</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>794</td>
<td>629</td>
<td>1,423</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>654</td>
<td>375</td>
<td>1,029</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>538</td>
<td>376</td>
<td>914</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3,328</td>
<td>2,422</td>
<td>5,750</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(The second level retirement do not include retirements of teachers from ETBs as their retirement are processed directly by the ETBs).

**Table 2 – Teaching Posts Allocated 2012 - 2018**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Year</th>
<th>Primary</th>
<th>Difference on previous year</th>
<th>Post Primary</th>
<th>Difference on previous year</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Difference on previous year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012/13</td>
<td>32,175</td>
<td>247</td>
<td>25,374</td>
<td>-434</td>
<td>57,549</td>
<td>-187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013/14</td>
<td>32,828</td>
<td>653</td>
<td>25,626</td>
<td>252</td>
<td>58,454</td>
<td>905</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014/15</td>
<td>33,613</td>
<td>785</td>
<td>26,174</td>
<td>548</td>
<td>59,787</td>
<td>1,333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015/16</td>
<td>34,576</td>
<td>963</td>
<td>26,804</td>
<td>630</td>
<td>61,380</td>
<td>1,593</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016/17</td>
<td>35,669</td>
<td>1,093</td>
<td>27,966</td>
<td>1,162</td>
<td>63,635</td>
<td>2,255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017/18**</td>
<td>36,904</td>
<td>1,235</td>
<td>29,550</td>
<td>1,584</td>
<td>66,454</td>
<td>2,819</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**projected figures to end of 17/18 school year**

Teacher Retirements 2012-2016

Retirements are recorded by calendar year. The figures in Table 1 for 2012-2016 (inclusive) are retirements recorded by date of retirement and are published on my Department’s website.

Raw data for 2017 is currently being processed and as such is not available in the format requested by the Deputy. Work is underway to compile the 2017 data in the format similar to that for 2012-2016 and the final figures will be published on my Department’s website later in the year.

Teacher Allocations

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.

The recruitment and appointment of teachers to fill teaching posts is a matter for the individual school authority, subject to procedures agreed under Section 24 (3) of the Education Act 1998 (as amended by the Education (Amendment) Act 2012).

There are currently 36,900 teachers allocated to our primary schools and approximately 29,550 teachers allocated in our post primary schools. This is an increase of over 2,800 teachers compared to the 2016/17 school year and an increase of over 5,000 teachers compared to the 2015/16 school year.

In Budget 2018 an additional 1,280 teaching posts were announced effective from 01 September 2018 include:

- 545 teaching posts to cater for an estimated 8000 extra pupils in 2018.
- 305 posts to provide for a reduction in the primary staffing schedule from 27:1 to 26:1
- 230 new teachers in special classes and special schools
- 100 new Special Education teachers
- 100 new posts for Guidance

Overall it can be seen that the number of teaching posts allocated has increased between 2012 and the current school year by 4,729 posts at primary level and by 4,176 at post-primary
These additional posts have been successfully filled and I am giving priority to ensuring that the supply of teachers is sufficient to meet the requirements of the system over the coming years. In that regard, following consultation with the Irish Universities Association, I recently announced 380 additional places on post primary ITE programmes for 2018, including 100 at postgraduate level in the priority areas such as foreign languages and Irish.

I have also established the Teacher Supply Steering Group, which is chaired by the Secretary General of my Department. The Group will consider the issues that impact on teacher supply, including: policies and arrangements for schools and teachers that impact on teacher mobility/supply; promotion of the teaching profession; initial teacher education policy, provision, funding and support; and data/research requirements.

The Group will oversee a programme of actions according to strict timelines and clear deliverables to meet important needs. In undertaking its task, the Group will be cognisant of the requirement that all persons wishing to teach in recognised schools must meet the professional registration standards and criteria set by the Teaching Council, which is the professional regulatory body for the teaching.

Teacher Career Breaks

136. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of teachers who have availed of career breaks, duration of career breaks and on-career breaks in each year since 2010, by primary and secondary teachers and in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18655/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The information on the numbers of Career Breaks availed of by teachers in primary and post primary schools excluding those employed in schools operated by Education and Training Boards since the 2012/13 school year is provided in the table. This information is also available on my Department’s website.

A teacher may engage in the career break scheme subject to an overall maximum absence of 10 years in the course of his/her professional career. A career break shall be a period of not less than one school year and may be extended on an annual basis provided that the total period of the Career Break does not exceed 5 years at any one time. A subsequent Career Break may not be taken until the teacher has served for a period equal to the duration of the previous Career Break.

Each application for or extension of a Career Break shall be considered on its own merits by the employer within the context of the school’s policy statement. The decision of the employer shall be final. The employer means an Education and Training Board (ETB) for vocational schools/community colleges, community national schools and a Board of Management/Manager in the case of primary(excluding community national schools) voluntary secondary, community and comprehensive schools.

The Department’s website holds further information on the Career Break Scheme - (Terms and Conditions of Employment for Registered Teachers in Primary and Post Primary School - Chapter Eight refers.)

Breakdown of Career Break by year, sector and gender for 2012/13 – 2017/18
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Primary Male</th>
<th>Primary Female</th>
<th>Post Primary Male</th>
<th>Post Primary Female</th>
<th>Overall Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012/2013</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>1,105</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>254</td>
<td>1535</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013/2014</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>1,183</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>292</td>
<td>1715</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014/2015</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>1,236</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>321</td>
<td>1842</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015/2016</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>1,251</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>351</td>
<td>1941</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016/2017</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>1,348</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>373</td>
<td>2090</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017/2018</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>1,420</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>411</td>
<td>2264</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Excludes info from ETB’s and Community National Schools

Schools Building Projects Applications

137. Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív asked the Minister for Education and Skills when a building project to provide a permanent replacement school for a school (details supplied) will be approved; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18672/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I can confirm that building projects for the two schools referred to by the Deputy are included in my Department’s 6 Year Construction Programme.

Site issues have arisen in respect of the projects in question and my Department is continuing to liaise with the school’s Patron in this regard. I understand that my Department is awaiting a suitable meeting date to be notified by the Patron to discuss the matter further.

Special Educational Needs Data

138. Deputy Tom Neville asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of resource teachers recruited in each of the years from 2005 to 2017, inclusive, and to date in 2018, by county and in tabular form. [18676/18]

139. Deputy Tom Neville asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of SNAs recruited in each of the years from 2005 to 2017, inclusive, and to date in 2018, by county and in tabular form. [18677/18]

140. Deputy Tom Neville asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of special classes the National Council for Special Education plans to open in 2018, by county and in tabular form. [18678/18]

141. Deputy Tom Neville asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of special classes opened in each of the years from 2005 to 2017, inclusive, and to date in 2018, by county and in tabular form. [18679/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 139 to 141, inclusive, together.

On 24th April, in reply to a parliamentary question from the Deputy, I provided information on spending on special educational needs and Tables showing the following totals:

- The number of SNAs allocated from 2005 to 2018
- The number of special classes from 2010 to 2018
- The numbers of learning support and resource teachers from 2009 to 2017, and Special Education teachers in 2017/18

Details on the numbers of special classes in each school per county for the 2012/13, 2013/14, 2014/15, 2015/16, 2016/17 and 2017/18 school years are available on the NCSE’s website at http://ncse.ie/special-classes; while details on SNA and Resource teaching allocations for the same years, in each school per county, are available at http://ncse.ie/statistics.

I will arrange for the NCSE to reply directly to the deputy with Special Class, SNA, and Resource teaching details per county from 2005/06 to 2011/12, inclusive.

School Staff

142. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a school (details supplied) will receive additional teachers in September 2018. [18723/18]

143. **Deputy Mick Barry** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason the application by a school (details supplied) for additional teachers has been refused in view of its growth and reduced pupil-teacher ratio. [18742/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 142 and 143 together.

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. Budget 2018 announced a one point improvement to the primary staffing schedule, which reduced the average pupil teacher ratio to 26:1. The improved staffing schedule has been implemented for the 2018/19 school year and is set out in Circular 0010/2018, available on the Department of Education website.

In establishing their staffing for the 2018/19 school year, schools may appoint the number of teachers allowed for on the staffing schedule using the school enrolment of 30 September 2017. Any teachers appointed from the staffing schedule must be engaged in teaching duties within the school. Schools are subject to the published redeployment arrangements in filling teaching vacancies.

Qualifications Recognition

144. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason there is a requirement (details supplied) for persons seeking to have professional qualifications for regulated construction industry activities recognised in relation to qualifications obtained outside the State; if his attention has been drawn to the difficulty this requirement is having for residents of Border communities who have previously obtained the relevant qualifications in Northern Ireland and wish to work and provide services here and who may in previous years have provided such services here; the actions he will take to address this anomaly; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18747/18]

145. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason there is a requirement (details supplied) for persons seeking to have professional qualifications for regulated construction industry activities recognised for the provision of services on a temporary or occasional basis in relation to qualifications obtained outside the State; if his attention has been drawn to the difficulty this requirement is having for residents of Border communities
living here and that wish to work and provide services here; the actions he will take to address this anomaly; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18748/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan):**
I propose to take Questions Nos. 144 and 145 together.

A number of professional activities in the construction sector are regulated by the SOLAS Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) under the Safety Health and Welfare at Work (Construction) Regulations 2013. These professional activities may only be pursued by persons who are suitably qualified.

Directive 2005/36/EC on the recognition of professional qualifications provides the legal framework for the recognition of qualifications obtained outside the State and is transposed into Irish law by S.I. 8 of 2017. This Directive enables EU/EEA professionals to move between Member States and practice their chosen professions while respecting the regulatory standards of each jurisdiction.

SOLAS recognises qualifications in line with the provisions of Directive 2005/36/EC and S.I. 8 of 2017 which specifies processes which apply to professionals seeking to provide services on a temporary and occasional basis in the State. For professionals to avail of this option under the Directive, they must provide evidence that they are legally established to practice that profession in another Member State.

Where a profession is regulated in one Member State but not another, as is the case with the CSCS professions, legal establishment is evidenced by the professional displaying that they have pursued that profession in one or more Member States for at least one year during the last 10 years.

**School Transport Administration**

146. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the changes implemented in the school transport scheme ahead of the next round of school bus places being allocated; the meetings he has held on the matter; and if the concerns of parents who have paid for tickets and are not guaranteed a place will be considered. [18749/18]

**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 116,000 children, including almost 12,000 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 at a total cost of almost €190 million in 2017.

The purpose of my Department’s School Transport Scheme is, having regard to available resources, to support the transport to and from school of children who reside remote from their nearest school.

Children are generally eligible for school transport if they satisfy the distance criteria and are attending their nearest school. It is important to note that all eligible children are accommodated under the terms of the scheme.

Arising from commitments in the Programme for Government, a review of the Concession-
The review was published in December 2016 and made recommendations on both the charges and the rules element of concessionary school transport.

With regard to the charges for concessionary school transport the recommended course of action was to continue with the current position whereby charges remain in place for those in receipt of concessionary places. I agreed with this recommendation on the basis that those applying for concessionary transport are making a conscious decision to do so, understand that they are not eligible for school transport and understand the implications of this choice at the time of application.

The report also recommended that the number of concessionary places should be reduced in line with the rules introduced in 2012 on a phased basis. Previous plans to advance this option were put on hold, pending the completion of the review.

However upon consideration of the review and following discussions with the Cross Party Working Group which I established to feed into the review, I decided that there should be no planned programme of downsizing in the coming years except in line with normal operational decisions within the current scheme.

The terms of the School Transport Scheme are applied equitably on a national basis.

School Transport Appeals

147. Deputy Sean Sherlock asked the Minister for Education and Skills the detail of the responses issued to the appeal made by the parents of a child (details supplied) for the provision of school bus services. [18750/18]

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 116,000 children, including almost 12,000 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 at a total cost of almost €190 million in 2017.

Under the terms of my Department’s Post Primary School Transport scheme, children are eligible for transport where they reside not less than 4.8 kms from and are attending their nearest education centre as determined by the Department/Bus Éireann, having regard to ethos and language.

My Department has been advised that the child referred to by the Deputy is not attending their nearest education centre and is, therefore, not eligible for transport under the terms of the scheme.

Children who are not eligible for school transport may apply for transport on a concessionary basis only. Concessionary transport is subject to a number of terms and conditions including the availability of spare seats on an existing service and payment of the annual charge.

Seats for concessionary applicants are allocated after all eligible children have been accommodated on school transport services. This exercise normally takes place after the closing date for receipt of payments. Where seats are limited a random selection process is used.
This case was also the subject of an appeal to the School Transport Appeals Board which has made a determination in the matter. The parents have been notified of this decision.

**School Accommodation Provision**

148. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the accommodation funding that was granted to a school (details supplied). [18766/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** I can confirm that the school referred to by the Deputy submitted an application for major capital works to my Department under the Additional School Accommodation Scheme. The Additional Accommodation Scheme is designed to address immediate essential classroom accommodation deficits.

In that regard, having examined the application, approval in principle has been granted to the school in respect of four additional temporary classrooms to meet immediate requirements in September 2018.

**School Staff**

149. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his attention has been drawn to the fact that a school (details supplied) will no longer meet the threshold for an administrative principal from September 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18773/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The school has been in touch with my office in relation to the matter raised. 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 criteria for the appointment of an administrative principal to a school, which are enrolment related, are set out in Appendix B of Circular, 0010/2018. The school referred to by the Deputy does not meet this criteria. There is no scope to deviate from these arrangements.

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

**State Examinations Commission**

150. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on whether it is necessary for teachers to have taught the politics course to be employed by the State Examinations Commission to correct the leaving certificate exam; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18818/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The State Examinations Commission has statutory responsibility for operational matters relating to the certificate examinations. In view of this I have forwarded your query to the State Examinations Commission for direct reply to you.
151. **Deputy Colm Brophy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if funding will be provided to a school (details supplied) to ensure the maintenance of the existing prefabricated structure until the new school building is completed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18826/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** I wish to advise the Deputy that my Department has finalised the project brief for the development of a permanent school building for the school in question and the school has been advised accordingly. The Department will be in further contact with the school shortly relating to the next steps to advance the project through the architectural planning process. The school has also been provided with a point of contact within my Department for the project.

The Deputy will be aware that the site is currently in the ownership of the local authority. My Department is in the process of acquiring this site and officials from both the Department and the local authority are working constructively to finalise this acquisition.

My Department has spoken with the school principal relating to the matter referred to by the Deputy. I understand that the school is currently assessing the nature of the work required. My Department advised the principal that it is open to the school to use its minor works grant, which all primary schools received, to carry out the works in full or on a phased basis as that grant permits if the school considers them to be a priority.

### Student Grant Scheme Payments

152. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the financial supports and or grant aid available for a student (details supplied) who accepts a college placement in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18836/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The main support available to assist students with the cost of higher education is the student grant scheme. SUSI’s online system for the 2018 Scheme is now open. Students attending college in the academic year 2018/19 are required to submit their grant application to Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI) via www.susi.ie to have their eligibility for grant assistance assessed.

Students attending approved undergraduate courses in the UK can apply for a maintenance grant provided they meet the terms and conditions of the Student Grant Scheme.

Tax relief at the standard rate of tax may be claimed in respect of tuition fees paid for approved courses at approved colleges of higher education including approved undergraduate and postgraduate courses in EU Member States and in non-EU countries. Further information on this tax relief is available from the Revenue Commissioners on www.revenue.ie.

I understand that a student from another European Union (EU) country studying in the UK can apply for a student loan to cover the cost of tuition fees. Further information is available on https://www.gov.uk/student-finance

Prospective students may also wish to contact the relevant college in the UK for advice on the type and range of supports that are available in that particular college.

### Schools Building Projects Status
153. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the timeframe for the construction of a new school building for a school (details supplied); the stage the plans are at; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18837/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The project to which the Deputy refers is being devolved for delivery to the local Education and Training Board. My Department is in the process of arranging a Service Level Agreement with the ETB in this regard. Once this is in place, the ETB can proceed to appoint a Design Team for the project to move through the various stages of architectural planning and on to tender and construction.

### Teaching Qualifications

154. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason an application to the Teaching Council by a person (details supplied) to have their Canadian degrees recognised here for teaching purposes has been delayed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18850/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The Teaching Council considers applications from teachers who qualified outside the EU/EEA and are deemed fully qualified in their home country. Each application is assessed individually.

A fully qualified teacher will have completed a recognised teacher education qualification and programme of induction and can provide an official letter from the Competent Authority or Ministry of Education in their home country confirming recognition as a fully qualified teacher in that country.

The Council is the independent regulatory body with statutory authority for the professional regulation of teachers in this State. My Department does not have any direct involvement in the registration of teachers by the Council.

Registration decisions are therefore a matter for the Teaching Council and the person referred to by the Deputy should continue to liaise directly with the Council in this matter.

The issues raised by the Deputy will fall to be considered by the Teacher Supply Steering Group, which I recently established with the Secretary General of my Department as Chair. I have asked the Teaching Council to review subject criteria and processes for assessing out of State qualifications.

### Schools Refurbishment

155. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when a school (details supplied) will receive capital funding for refurbishment; if this school is on a list in his Department; the status of the school’s application for assistance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18854/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** My Department is in receipt of an application for capital funding from the school referred to by the Deputy to undertake refurbishment works to provide improved accommodation for the school.

My Department is aware of the specific needs of the school and is working with the school to address these needs. In this regard, my Department has arranged to meet with the school authorities in the coming week to discuss the proposed project.
156. Deputy Micheál Martin asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the capital plans for each secondary school in Cork city and county; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18855/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I wish to advise the Deputy that the current status of all building projects, including those in Cork city and county may be viewed on my Department’s website www.education.ie – Schools & Colleges - Building Works.

157. Deputy Tony McLoughlin asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of new and additional places created and the capital expenditure including summer works, minor works, emergency works and other capital expenditure on school building in each year since 2010, by county in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18867/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The following table outlines, each year from 2010 to 2017 on a county basis, the capital expenditure incurred under Subhead D.3 - the building, equipment and furnishing of primary and post-primary schools. In addition, the table includes, on a county basis, the number of new and replacement school places provided by the completion of large scale projects over the same period.

Building unit capital spend:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>7,307,294.17</td>
<td>9,222,650.89</td>
<td>8,556,150.90</td>
<td>7,745,688.48</td>
<td>7,850,519.26</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cavan</td>
<td>10,256,430.92</td>
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<td>8,805,051.46</td>
<td>4,598,344.95</td>
<td>7,340,508.37</td>
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<tr>
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<td>30,827,761.52</td>
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<td>53,665,492.44</td>
<td>58,875,549.77</td>
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<tr>
<td>Donegal</td>
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<td>30,827,761.52</td>
<td>45,370,230.45</td>
<td>53,665,492.44</td>
<td>58,875,549.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galway</td>
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<td>30,827,761.52</td>
<td>45,370,230.45</td>
<td>53,665,492.44</td>
<td>58,875,549.77</td>
</tr>
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Question No. 158 answered with Question No. 122.

Teacher Data

159. Deputy Thomas Byrne asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of additional teaching posts provided in 2017; the number of these appointed to meet demographic needs; and the number that arose owing to changes to guidance. [18915/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The 2017/18 school year saw an increase of over 5000 teaching posts in our schools compared to the 2015/16 school year.

Budget 2017 set out the resources available for schools for the 2017/18 school year. This Budget represented the start of a major reinvestment in education, and the first phase of implementation of the Action Plan for Education, aimed at becoming the best education system in Europe within a decade. The budget provided for over 2,400 additional teaching posts for our primary and post primary schools for the 2017/18 school year. This included 680 additional teaching posts to meet demographic need and 100 additional posts for enhancements to guidance provision.

Measures announced by my Department as part of Budgets 2016, 2017 and 2018 mean that 500 of the 600 guidance posts that were withdrawn in Budget 2012, will be restored to schools from September 2018.
160. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of additional resource teacher posts provided in 2017. [18916/18]

**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 revised allocation process replaces the generalised allocation process at primary and post primary school level for learning support and high incidence special educational needs, and the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) allocation process which provided additional resource teaching supports to schools, to support pupils assessed as having Low Incidence disabilities.

The new Special Education Teaching allocation provides a single unified allocation for special educational support teaching needs to each school, based on each school’s educational profile.

Allocations based on the school profiles were issued to all schools on 7th March, 2017.

The aim of this new model is to deliver better outcomes for children with special educational needs. Substantial research, analysis, consultation with service users and stakeholders, and piloting have gone in to the development of this model and all of the evidence points to the fact that this new system will deliver better outcomes for children.

No school, has lost supports as a result of the implementation of the new model. In addition, no school received an allocation, for the support of pupils with complex needs, less than the allocation they received to support such pupils during the 2016/17 school year.

An additional 900 teaching posts have been provided in the 2017/2018 school year to support the introduction of this new allocation model. The provision of an additional 900 teaching posts is a very significant investment in the provision of additional teaching support for pupils with special educational needs in our schools.

The additional funding provided additional supports to over 1300 schools who identified as needing additional supports as a result of the new model while ensuring that no school received a reduced allocation.

For the 2017/18 school year to date, 13,306 additional special education teaching posts have been allocated, of which 13,281 have been allocated to schools, with 25 posts having been allocated to the NCSE to develop support services for schools.

Allocations may continue to be made to schools, where exceptional circumstances arise, in accordance with the review criteria set at [www.ncse.ie](http://www.ncse.ie).

**Schools Building Projects Status**

161. **Deputy Paul Murphy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the progress on the building of a permanent school structure at a school (details supplied); the reason the time-frames indicated to parents have not been kept to; and if he will make a statement on the matter.
Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I wish to advise the Deputy that my Department has finalised the project brief for the development of a permanent school building for the school in question and the school has been advised accordingly. The Department will be in further contact with the school shortly relating to the next steps to advance the project through the architectural planning process. The school has also been provided with a point of contact within my Department for the project.

The Deputy will be aware that the site is currently in the ownership of the local authority. My Department is in the process of acquiring this site and officials from both the Department and the local authority are working constructively to finalise this acquisition.

Foirne Scoile

162. D’fhiafraigh Deputy Pearse Doherty den Aire Oideachais agus Scileanna an gcas faidh sé le tosaireacht ó scol (sonrá tugtha) i gContae Dhún na nGall chun a cás eisceachtúil ó thaobh soláthar foirne agus maoiniú a phlé; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [18921/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Rinne mo Roinn breithniú ar an gcomhfhreagras a ndearna an Teachta tagairt dó maidir le Príomhoide Riaracháin a cheapadh agus eisíodh freagra le déanaí.

Foilsiúta na critéir a bhaineann le leithdháileadh poist mhúinteoirícheacha go bliantúil ar shuíomh gréasáin na Roinne. Úsáidtear an sceideal foirne don scoilbhliain ábhartha agus rollúthe na ndaltaí ar an 30 Meán Fómhair roimhe sin mar eochairthoisc chun na hacmhainní foirne a chuirtear ar fáil i ngach scoil faoi leith a chinneadh.


Feidhmithear an sceideal foirne go soiléir agus go tréidhearcach agus caitear le gach scoil den chineál céanna ar an mbealach céanna beag beann ar an áit ina bhfuil said.

Schools Building Projects Status

163. Deputy Margaret Murphy O’Mahony asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of school building projects (details supplied). [18929/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The current status of the school building projects referred to by the Deputy is as follows:

Holy Family Special School, Charleville – Roll No. 19433M

An extension to the existing school building providing 6 classrooms, GP Hall and ancillary accommodation, was handed over on 16th September 2016.

Stewards Hospital Special School – Roll No. 19032R

Construction of a new 28 classroom school commenced on 2nd May 2017 and subject to no issues arising is due to be completed in March 2019.
The building project for this school is currently at an early stage of architectural planning, Stage 2a (Developed Design Stage) where the preferred option design is developed to a stage where the project is fully cost planned and can be prepared to lodge for statutory approvals.

The Stage 2a Stakeholders meeting for the project was held recently and comments will issue shortly to the Board of Management and LMETB. If there are no issues outstanding from the Stage 2a meeting the project will be authorised to progress to Stage 2b (Detailed Design Stage).

St Martin’s Special School – Roll No. 19108B

A new 14 classroom school was completed in October 2017

Benincasa Special School – Roll No. 18863J

This school was approved a devolved grant under the Department’s 2015 Additional Accommodation Scheme for a refurbishment and extension project. The project is currently at stage 2b of the architectural planning process. The school recently submitted the stage 2b report. This report is currently being evaluated and the Department will be in contact with the school authority as soon as possible in relation to the outcome

St Michaels House Special School Grosvenor School, Leopardstown Roll No. 18671A

The major building is at an early stage of architectural planning, Stage 2a (Developed Sketch Scheme), where the preferred option design is developed to a stage where the project is fully cost planned and can be prepared to lodge for statutory approvals.

The project is currently on hold as the School Patron informed the Department of a proposal to relocate St Michael’s House. The Department has contacted the Patron seeking clarification on their proposal and a response is awaited.

Rosedale Special School, Renmore - Roll No. 20070J

The major building project is at an early stage of architectural planning, Stage 2a (Developed Sketch Scheme), where the preferred option design is developed to a stage where the project is fully cost planned and can be prepared to lodge for statutory approvals.

The Design Team are currently finalising the Stage 2a submission. Upon receipt and review of this report the Department will revert to the Board of Management with regard to the further progression of the project at that time.

St. Oliver’s Special School, Tuam – Roll No. 20330J

The building project is for a new 6 classroom special needs school on a Greenfield site.

The project is currently at Stage 2B of Architectural Planning. Planning Permission has been received and the Disability Access Certificate and Fire Safety Certificate have been granted.

The Stage 2B report has been received and is under review by the Department. A letter has recently issued to the school with regard to a timeframe for progression to tender.

St Anne’s Special School – Roll No. 19277B

The major building project for this school is currently at an early stage of architectural planning, Stage 2a (Developed Design Stage) where the preferred option design is developed to a
stage where the project is fully cost planned and can be prepared to lodge for statutory approvals.

A Stage 2a Stakeholders meeting will take place on Monday 30th April at which the Design Team will present the Stage 2a submission.

Following this meeting and providing that the Stage 2a documentation is in order the Department will issue a letter to the Board of Management with regards the further progression of the project.

St. Bríd’s Special School – Roll No. 19375B

The building project for this school is included on the Department’s Capital Programme.

The school is currently located in St. Hubert’s Day Centre, Pavilion Road, Castlebar, Co. Mayo. The Department has approved in principle, subject to contract, to acquire this property from the Owners, Western Care Association and the acquisition is currently at conveyancing stage.

Once the conveyancing has been completed subject to no issues arising, the project will progress into the architectural planning process.

School Fees

164. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason a school (details supplied) increased its fees for music lessons by 50%; and if this increase will be reconsidered in view of the fact that this will be untenable for students that are already struggling to meet the financial costs of studying. [18933/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan):**
In 2014, my Department established the ‘Committee for Non-Mainstream Department of Education and Skills funded Music Education’. The Committee was established to, *inter alia*, oversee the work of organisations in receipt of funding by the Department of Education and Skills in relation to non-mainstream music education.

In its engagement with organisations including CDETB, the Committee has suggested that emphasis of Department-funded tuition should be focused on young individuals up to eighteen years, and also suggested that the Centre should focus on group tuition to allow more students overall to benefit from the service.

The decision to increase fees is an operational matter for which CDETB has responsibility. In view of this I have forwarded your query to the City of Dublin Education and Training Board for direct reply to the Deputy.

Teacher Training Provision

165. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of teacher training graduates who have completed a special educational needs component in their initial teacher training; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18952/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** Programmes of initial teacher education (ITE) were reconfigured and extended in line with the Teaching Council’s
Initial Teacher Education: Criteria and Guidelines for Programme Providers and the changes to ITE proposed in the National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People 2011-2020. Under the reconfigured model, inclusive education, including special education, is a mandatory area of study for all student teachers who are undertaking ITE programmes at primary and post-primary levels.

The first graduates of the lengthened and reconfigured programmes were in 2016. It is estimated that there were c. 3,400 graduates from the primary and post-primary programmes of Initial Teacher Education in 2017 with a similar number expected to graduate in 2018.

The Deputy should note also that my Department annually funds post-graduate programmes for approximately 400 teachers involved in Learning Support and special education.

Schools Building Projects Status

166. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when the overall contract for the construction of a new education campus (details supplied) in County Cork will go to tender; when the campus development will be completed; when the schools will open on the campus site; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18955/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The project to which the Deputy refers has been devolved for delivery to the local Education & Training Board.

The Design team has now completed a revised Stage 2B report which was recently submitted to my Department for consideration. In addition, contractors for the project are in the process of being pre-qualified.

Once the pre-qualification of contractors has been completed and the stage 2B submission has been approved, the intention is that the project will proceed to tender and construction. It is not possible to say when the project will commence on-site until these processes have been completed.

Third Level Staff

167. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the progress his Department has made in respect of the implementation of the Cush report regarding part-time and fixed-term employment in third level institutions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18969/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The Report of the Chair of the Expert Group on Fixed Term and Part-Time issues in Lecturing in Ireland was published in July 2016 and the Report contains a number of recommendations that assist in addressing concerns raised about the level of part-time and fixed-term employment in lecturing in the third level sector.

My Department issued directions to the sector to implement the recommendations contained in the report in accordance with the terms of the Lansdowne Road Agreement and my understanding is that the Institutions have done so.

If a union representing lecturing grades believes that a third level college is not implementing the recommendations contained within the Report of the Chair of the Expert Group, that union can seek to have the matter addressed using the dispute resolution procedures provided
Third Level Staff

168. Deputy Kathleen Funchion asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the establishment of an adjudicator system to hear disputes arising from the implementation of the Cush report as requested by his Department in 2017. [18970/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): My Department wrote to the university sector in June 2017 requesting that an Adjudicator process be put in place to ensure implementation of the Cush Report.

I understand that following consultation with the unions the university sector has now appointed an Adjudicator and established an adjudication system for the purposes of the Cush Report.

Teaching Contracts

169. Deputy Kathleen Funchion asked the Minister for Education and Skills the progress his Department has made in respect of the implementation of the Ward report; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18971/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Haddington Road Agreement provided for the establishment of an Expert Group to consider and report on the level of fixed-term and part-time employment in teaching, having regard to the importance for teachers of employment stability and security and taking account of system and school needs and Teaching Council registration requirements.

The report of the Chair of the Expert Group (the Ward Report) was published in September 2014.

The Report recommended changes to take place from the commencement of the 2015/16 school year. These changes were implemented by my Department under Circular 0023/2015 (primary) and Circular 0024/2015 (post-primary).

The changes recommended in the Report and implemented by my Department allow fixed-term and part-time teachers to acquire permanent full-time positions more easily and quickly than before.

Schools Building Projects Status

170. Deputy Jonathan O’Brien asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding the recent announcement for the construction of a new school in Gurranabraher, County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18977/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): As the Deputy is aware, I announced plans for the establishment of 42 new schools over the next four years (2019 to 2022), including a new primary school to be established in 2021 to serve the Gurranabraher-Cork City school planning area. This announcement follows nationwide demographic exercises carried out by my Department into the future need for primary and post-primary schools.
across the country and the 4-year horizon will enable increased lead-in times for planning and delivery of the necessary infrastructure.

Following on from the announcement, the locations for all of the schools will be determined as part of the site acquisition process.

A patronage process is run after it has been decided, based on demographic analysis, that a new school is required. This patronage process is open to all patron bodies and prospective patrons. Parental preferences for each patron, from parents of children who reside in the school planning areas concerned, together with the extent of diversity currently available in these areas, are key to decisions in relation to the outcome of this process.

The patronage process for new schools is overseen by an external independent advisory group, the New Schools Establishment Group (NSEG). Following their consideration of my Department’s assessment reports, the NSEG submits a report with recommendations to me for consideration and final decision. The assessment reports and the NSEG recommendations for all such patronage processes are available on my Department’s website.

An Online Patronage Process System (OPPS) is currently being developed by my Department to provide objective information to all parents which will allow them to make an informed choice about their preferred model of patronage for their child’s education. Parental preferences are currently collected based on direct engagement with patron bodies.

**Education and Training Boards Staff**

171. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if it is possible to register with an ETB as a registered tutor for drama, music or otherwise; and the procedure for such registration. [19029/18]

*Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):* Each ETB is responsible for the recruitment and management of its staff and my Department has no direct role in such matters.

If an individual wishes to be employed in an ETB as a tutor for drama, music or otherwise, they should contact their local ETB which will be able to advise on available vacancies and the procedures for recruitment.

**Schools Building Projects Status**

172. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the way in which his Department plans to deal with the provision of a sports hall for a school (details supplied); and the details of project preparatory or pre-planning works carried out to date in addition to likely project timelines should a planning application be approved. [19030/18]

*Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):* I am pleased to advise the Deputy that architectural planning has commenced for the delivery of the PE hall under the Department’s Design and Build Programme. This PE hall forms part of a joint school building project. Site surveys have commenced in advance of preparing the planning application which will be the next key milestone in the progression of the project. It is not possible to provide timelines for the further progression of the project to tender and construction stages until all statutory approvals have been secured.
173. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the location and patronage of the new schools recently announced in the capital plan for County Kildare; if such details are not available, if he will provide available information in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19031/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** As the Deputy is aware, I announced plans for the establishment of 42 new schools over the next four years (2019 to 2022). This announcement follows nationwide demographic exercises carried out by my Department into the future need for primary and post-primary schools across the country and the 4-year horizon will enable increased lead-in times for planning and delivery of the necessary infrastructure.

Following on from the announcement, the locations for all of the schools will be determined as part of the site acquisition process.

A patronage process is run after it has been decided, based on demographic analysis, that a new school is required. This patronage process is open to all patron bodies and prospective patrons. Parental preferences for each patron, from parents of children who reside in the school planning areas concerned, together with the extent of diversity currently available in these areas, are key to decisions in relation to the outcome of this process. It is expected that patronage processes for schools due to open in September 2019 will be run in 2018.

The patronage process for new schools is overseen by an external independent advisory group, the New Schools Establishment Group (NSEG). Following their consideration of my Department’s assessment reports, the NSEG submits a report with recommendations to me for consideration and final decision. The assessment reports and the NSEG recommendations for all such patronage processes are available on my Department’s website.

An Online Patronage Process System (OPPS) is currently being developed by my Department to provide objective information to all parents which will allow them to make an informed choice about their preferred model of patronage for their child’s education. Parental preferences are currently collected based on direct engagement with patron bodies.

**Schools Building Projects Applications**

174. **Deputy Fergus O’Dowd** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on an issue raised in correspondence from a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19039/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** I wish to advise the Deputy that the school in question submitted a master plan containing details of how it envisaged the school developing in the future. The master plan would require significant capital funding to undertake a major extension and refurbishment of the existing school building. The school indicated that the proposed project would cater for future demographic growth in the area as well as providing additional specialist accommodation.

My Department liaised with the school in the context of the priority elements of the proposal. The school subsequently identified science labs as a priority element and submitted an application for capital grant. Following a visit to the school by my Department’s inspectorate, a devolved grant for two science labs was approved to the school for delivery.
At the time, my Department advised the school that we were in the process of carrying out a nationwide demographic review of all school planning areas, including the area in which the school is located to determine where future need for primary and post-primary school places across the county is required.

Arising from this review, the Deputy will be aware that my Department announced recently plans to establish 42 new schools over the next 4 years. The area where this school is located was one of the areas identified to establish a new post primary school in 2019. This new school will provide additional school capacity to meet demographic need in the area.

Following this announcement, my Department was in further contact with the school relating to the building project that has been approved. The school indicated that they will revert to the Department with additional information and this is awaited.

The Deputy will be aware that under the National Development Plan (NDP), increased funding has been provided for the school sector capital investment programme. This funding allows for a continued focus on the provision of new permanent school places to keep pace with demographic demand and also provides for an additional focus on the refurbishment of existing school buildings to include the building and modernisation of PE facilities in primary and post-primary schools.

School Discipline

175. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on whether the section 29 procedure is inappropriate in the case of a proposed expulsion or suspension of a child with special needs; and his plans for reform in the area. [19043/18]


Each school Code of Behaviour sets out the standards of behaviour that shall be observed by each student attending the school. The Code of Behaviour must also set out any measures that the school may take when a student fails or refuses to observe those standards of behaviour. The Code of Behaviour must also disclose the procedures to be followed before a student may be suspended or expelled from the school. The School must implement fair procedures when considering whether to suspend or expel a student and the school is obliged to take special care to ensure that the fair procedures are accessible to students with special educational needs.

Under Section 29 of the Education Act, 1998 an appeal can be made to the Secretary General of my Department where a board of management has decided to suspend a student for more than 20 school days in any school year or to permanently expel a student. In relation to expulsion, a Section 29 appeal can only be taken where a board of management have formally decided to expel a student. Under Section 24 of the Education Welfare Act, 2000 a board of management must inform the Education Welfare Service of Tusla when they intend to expel a student and the Board must allow 20 school days to pass before making a decision on whether to formally proceed with the expulsion.

Each Section 29 Appeals Committee conduct a full ‘de novo’ appeal on the matter. The Appeals Committee must come to their own independent determination on whether the suspension or expulsion is warranted. In the appeal hearing, parents outline the grounds for their appeal and they are also allowed to question the school representatives through the Appeals Committee
Each Section 29 Appeals Committee is made up of three members. One of these must be a serving school inspector and the other two members are normally retired former school principals and inspectors. It is generally individuals with significant experience of working in the education sector, normally at a senior level in schools, who are appointed to serve as Appeal Committee members. My Department also provides regular training to Section 29 Appeal Committee members.

While I do not believe that the Section 29 Appeals process is inappropriate in the case of a suspension or expulsion of a student with special educational needs, I am proposing to make some changes to the Section 29 Appeals process as part of the Education (Admission to Schools) Bill 2016. These changes aim to make the Section 29 appeals process more efficient and less cumbersome for parents and schools. Among the changes proposed, I am setting out in legislation for the first time the factors that a Section 29 Appeals Committee must have regard to when hearing and determining an appeal in relation to suspension or expulsion.

**Family Reunification Policy**

176. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the rights to work of non-EEA citizens here who are partners or spouses of Irish citizens. [18589/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that immediate family members of Irish citizens who are granted immigration status through the family reunification process have the right to work without employment permits and to establish or manage/operate a business in the State. They should receive a “stamp 4” immigration permission.

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.

**Criminal Law**

177. **Deputy Denise Mitchell** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if guidelines or restrictions exist on the use of electronic anti-loitering devices, commonly referred to as mosquito alarms; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18625/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I can advise the Deputy that Section 2 of the Non-Fatal Offences Against the Person Act 1997 sets out the offence of assault and refers to the application of “force”. Noise is expressly included as being one of the types of “force” to which section 2 of the Act applies.

I am informed by the Garda authorities that an instruction issued to all member of An Garda Síochána and directs that any complaints received regarding the use of such devices will be fully investigated with a view to seeking the directions of the Director of Public Prosecutions.

If any person has concerns about the use of such devices in a particular locality, the matter should be reported to the Gardaí.
Wards of Court

178. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of children or young adults who have been made wards of court in the past ten years; the degree to which the process continues to provide help and support to the children in question; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19136/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** As the Deputy may be aware, the High Court has jurisdiction in Wards of Court matters and management of the courts is the responsibility of the Courts Service, which is independent in exercising its functions under the Courts Service Act 1998. However, in order to be of assistance to the Deputy, I have had enquiries made and the Courts Service has informed me that a total of 170 minors, persons under the age of 18, were brought into Wardship from 2008 to 2017.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of persons under 18 brought into Wardship</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
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<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Courts Service has also informed me that there are a number of reasons why it might be necessary to take a person under 18 years of age into Wardship. The most common situation is where the minor has been awarded substantial damages by a Court and has special housing and/or care needs.

While the needs of each ward are different, all wards under a legal disability are therefore vulnerable persons. The Wards of Court Office, under the direction of President of the High Court, takes its responsibility to protect the person and property of every ward seriously, ensuring that the ward’s assets are protected and appropriately invested, approving expenditure on the ward’s behalf, dealing with the ward’s committee or guardian (usually a family member) to ensure that the ward’s personal needs are met, dealing with proposals for sale, purchase or adaptation of accommodation for the ward’s benefit, liaising with healthcare professionals and drafting proposals concerning the person and property of the ward for the President of the High Court to help and support the ward.

Garda Recruitment

179. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the reason persons working for police forces in other jurisdictions are not considered or permitted for direct entry as members of An Garda Síochána; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18563/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** While there are currently no mechanisms for the transfer of persons with policing experience and qualifications gained in
another jurisdiction to An Garda Síochána, there are a number of routes under the Garda Síochána Act 2005 by which individuals with such experience may join the organisation.

Competitions for the positions of Garda Commissioner and Deputy Garda Commissioner are not restricted to serving members and, as the Deputy will be aware, the most recent competitions for these posts, including the competition underway for the selection of the next Garda Commissioner, were open to all individuals with relevant experience and qualifications.

Competitions for appointment to the ranks of Assistant Garda Commissioner, chief superintendent and superintendent are open to members of the PSNI once they meet the eligibility criteria set out in the relevant Regulations under the Garda Síochána Act 2005. The Policing Authority assumed responsibility for undertaking these competitions on 1 January 2017 and, coinciding with that date, the eligibility criteria were extended to include any member of the PSNI not below the rank of inspector who has served not less than 2 years in that rank. Previously, they were confined to those in the rank immediately below. The 2005 Act also provides for the secondment from the PSNI to certain ranks in An Garda Síochána for a period not exceeding 3 years.

Also of relevance is the statutory provision for former members of An Garda Síochána to be re-appointed to the organisation. The most recent applications in this respect concern a number of former members who departed to serve in police services in Australia and have gained valuable skills and experience from that service and wish to re-join An Garda Síochána.

Individuals with appropriate policing experience and qualifications gained in other jurisdictions may also be suitable for appointment to various civilian roles available within the Garda organisation. Having regard to the Government’s aim of 20% of the Garda workforce comprising civilians by 2021 it can be expected that these opportunities will increase.

I am very keen to explore how further opportunities can be created to open up entry routes at all levels and in line with the recommendations of the Garda Inspectorate report ‘Changing Policing in Ireland’. In this regard my predecessor requested the Inspectorate in October 2016 to examine options for opening up entry routes into An Garda Síochána at all levels and report back with recommendations. Those options could include, for example, fast track entry for policing professionals from other jurisdictions at the lower ranks and the targeted intake of experienced skilled police officers at the senior ranks. The report will also include an examination of practice in other jurisdictions. I have been advised by the Garda Inspectorate that the report is in the final review stages and will be provided to me shortly.

Naturalisation Applications

180. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the correct procedure to update a GNIB card in the case of a person (details supplied); the dates for which stamp 4 has been held by the applicant over the past ten years to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18570/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that the person concerned was granted permission to remain in the State, on a stamp 4 basis, on 11 April 2008. This permission was subsequently renewed with the latest permission granted up to 23 April 2018. It is open to the person concerned to contact their local registration office for a further renewal period, as outlined in their decision letter.

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.

**Residential Institutions Redress Scheme**

181. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the efforts that will be made to include those persons who were detained in the Magdalen laundries or mother and baby homes and who are dissatisfied with the redress scheme; if the proposed meeting will be confined to those who contacted the Ombudsman; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18600/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** To date 691 applicants have received redress amounting to €25.9m in lump sums under the Magdalen Restorative Justice Ex-gratia Scheme. In addition, qualifying applicants receive additional benefits under the Scheme which include an enhanced medical card from the HSE and ‘top up’ pension payments from the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection.

I recently informed the House that I had carefully considered the Ombudsman’s November 2017 report on the administration of the scheme by my Department and that I had held constructive discussions with him on my plans to implement the recommendations in his report. I have also briefed my Cabinet colleagues on these plans.

In relation to the four recommendations in the Ombudsman’s report, the following is the position:

- Where there is a dispute in respect of length of stay in a Magdalen Institution, Ms. Mary O’Toole S.C. has been appointed to review these cases.

- Ms O’Toole S.C. will also advise on assistance to be given to applicants who lack capacity to accept an award.

- The reviews recommended by the Ombudsman in regard to eligibility of cases of women who worked in one of the institutions covered by the Scheme but who were officially recorded as having been “admitted to” a training centre or industrial school located in the same building, attached to or located on the grounds of one of the laundries will be taken forward following a brief scoping review by an interdepartmental group, chaired by the Department of the Taoiseach.

- The recommendation to establish guidance on the development and operation of redress schemes will be examined in consultation with Government colleagues, including the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform.

The Minister for Children and Youth Affairs has responsibility for the on-going Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes. The Third Interim Report of that Commission was published on 5 December 2017 with its final reports due to be completed by February 2019.

**Citizenship Applications**

182. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the progress
to date in the determination of an application for citizenship in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18619/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that the processing of the application for a certificate of naturalisation from the person referred to by the Deputy is ongoing and will be submitted to me for decision as expeditiously as possible.

A letter issued to the person concerned on 5 March 2018 requesting certain information. Upon receipt of the requested information, the case will be further processed.

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

All persons making an application for a certificate of naturalisation are required to provide satisfactory evidence of their identity and nationality. This is usually in the form of a currently valid passport and may include other original supporting documents, such as a previously held or out of date passport, birth certificate and marriage certificate.

In rare circumstances where an applicant cannot produce their current passport, or a previous passport, birth certificate or other supporting documents, the applicant will be required to provide a full explanation. Such explanation should, where possible, be supported by satisfactory evidence that they have attempted to obtain such documentation and correspondence from the relevant authorities or embassy responsible for the issuing of passports and birth certificates in their country, clearly stating the reasons the documentation cannot be provided. The Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) will consider the explanation given and, if satisfied it is for reasons genuinely beyond the applicant’s control, may suggest alternative means to the person to assist in establishing their identity and nationality.

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.

**Insurance Industry**

183. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the position on recommendation No. 26 in the cost of insurance working group report of January 2017 on the establishment of a specialised and dedicated insurance unit within An Garda Síochána funded by industry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18659/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** Recommendation 26 of the ‘Report on the Cost of Motor Insurance’, published in January 2017, relates to exploring the potential for further cooperation between the insurance sector and An Garda Síochána in relation to insurance fraud investigation. Specifically, this involves considering the feasibility of establishing a specialised and dedicated insurance fraud unit within An Garda Síochána, funded by industry.

The Garda National Economic Crime Bureau (GNECB) has engaged with Insurance Ire-
land, submitting a mechanism for further cooperation and a costed proposal to Insurance Ire-
land in the latter half of 2017. Insurance Ireland has agreed to explore the proposal further,
subject to a full cost benefit analysis, to be carried out by Insurance Ireland’s Chief Financial
Officers Working Group. The intention would be that such a dedicated Garda unit would be
funded by Insurance Ireland members and non-members alike, i.e. all entities writing non-life
insurance business in Ireland.

Further progress on this recommendation is dependent upon the outcome of this cost benefit
analysis, which is currently awaited. Insurance Ireland has indicated that it expects to be in a
position to provide an update in this regard by the end of June 2018.

Any proposed agreed mechanism will, of course, ultimately be subject to the approval of the
Garda Commissioner and myself, as Minister for Justice and Equality.

Naturalisation Applications

184. Deputy Brendan Howlin asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the status of an
application by a person (details supplied) for naturalisation; and if he will make a statement on
the matter. [18675/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by the Irish
Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that the processing of the
application for a certificate of naturalisation from the person referred to by the Deputy is ongo-
ing and will be submitted to me for decision as expeditiously as possible. A letter issued to the
applicant on 26 April last seeking further information and a reply is awaited.

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

All persons making an application for a certificate of naturalisation are required to provide
satisfactory evidence of their identity and nationality. This is usually in the form of a currently
valid passport and may include other original supporting documents, such as a previously held
or out of date passport, birth certificate and marriage certificate.

In rare circumstances where an applicant cannot produce their current passport, or a previ-
ous passport, birth certificate or other supporting documents the applicant will be required to
provide a full explanation. Such explanation should, where possible, be supported by satisfac-
tory evidence that they have attempted to obtain such documentation and correspondence from
the relevant authorities or embassy responsible for the issuing of passports and birth certificates
in their country, clearly stating the reasons the documentation cannot be provided. The Irish
Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) will consider the explanation given and, if satis-
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the person to assist in establishing their identity and nationality.

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.
185. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of sergeants, inspectors and superintendents, respectively in County Wexford on 21 April 2011 and on 21 April 2018; the district to which each person was posted; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18681/18]

186. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the date upon which each superintendent was appointed to the Enniscorthy Garda district in each year since 2010; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18682/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 185 and 186 together.

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

I am informed by the 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. Where a deficiency in resources is identified the matter is considered fully and addressed accordingly.

Appointments to the ranks of Sergeant and Inspector are a matter for the Commissioner under section 14 of the Garda Síochána Act 2005.

I am advised by the Commissioner that the overall strength of the Sergeant, Inspectors and Superintendents rank was 1,861, 254 and 166 respectively as of 31 March 2018, the latest date for which figures are available. I am further advised by the Commissioner that there is currently a competition in train for promotion to the rank of Sergeant and Inspector with the aim of bringing the strength to 2,000 and 300 respectively, as agreed under the Employment Control Framework. I am assured by the Commissioner that following completion of this competition the needs of all Garda Divisions including the Wexford Division will be fully considered when determining the allocation of Sergeants and Inspectors. I am pleased to say that the employment control framework for the Superintendent rank has been increased from 166 to 168 as of last month to facilitate two specialist posts in Roads Policing and Major Events Management.

It is, of course, a matter for the Policing Authority under the Garda Síochána Act 2005, as amended to appoint persons to the rank of Superintendent having undertaken a competition for that purpose.

For the Deputy’s information, I have set out below in tabular form the number of Sergeants, Inspectors and Superintendents in the Wexford Division by Station, as of 30 April 2011 and on 31 March 2018, the latest date for which figures are currently available and the period of assignment of Superintendents allocated to Enniscorthy District since 10 February 2005.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DISTRICT</th>
<th>STATION</th>
<th>SG</th>
<th>IN</th>
<th>SU</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WEXFORD DIVISION 30 APRIL 2011</td>
<td>BLACKWATER</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CLONROCHE</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

91
### Period of Assignment of Superintendents allocated to Enniscorthy District since 10 February 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Superintendent</td>
<td>21/02/2012 – 09/03/2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superintendent</td>
<td>09/03/2015 – 13/12/2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superintendent</td>
<td>24/10/2017 to date</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Prison Regulations

187. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if section 44.(1) of the Prison Rules 2007 SI 252 of 2007 will be amended to include the phrase “(k) Members of the Oireachtas” in order to ensure that correspondence from Members of the Houses of the Oireachtas to and from prisoners is dealt with securely and promptly. [18713/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I wish to thank the Deputy for her proposal to amend Rule 44 (1) of the Prison Rules 2007, to include members of the Oireachtas. This proposal merits further consideration and I have asked my officials to liaise with officials in the Irish Prison Service to explore it in more detail. I will respond directly to the Deputy when this review is finalised.

Visa Applications

188. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if an appeal for a visa by a person (details supplied) will be considered and granted; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18767/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that the decision to refuse the application referred to was upheld on appeal, and the applicant and sponsor were advised accordingly.

As only one appeal is permitted, no further review of the application can be undertaken. However, it is open to the applicant to submit a fresh visa application at any time. Any new application should address the refusal reasons communicated to them in the previous application.

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.

In addition, applicants may themselves e-mail queries directly to visamail@justice.ie.

Garda Operations

189. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Question No. 319 of 20 March 2018, the status of the work of the multi-stakeholder group and the meeting that was due to be held on 25 April 2018. [18807/18]

197. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if the meeting which had been scheduled for 25 April 2018 of interested bodies and parties to discuss the issue of problem quad and scrambler use has taken place; if so, the steps and timelines to address this ongoing issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19051/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 189 and 197 together.

I can inform the Deputy that a cross-agency meeting took place at my Department on
25 April 2018. The meeting was attended by officials from the Departments of Justice and Equality; Transport, Tourism and Sport; Housing, Planning and the Environment; and Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht; An Garda Síochána; the Road Safety Authority; and the Revenue Commissioners. My Department also met separately with a representative from Dublin City Council on 23 April.

As the Deputy is aware, a multi-agency approach is required to tackle this anti-social issue effectively. The purpose of the cross-sectoral meeting was to ascertain whether there are additional legislative or other solutions, which can assist in dealing with this the misuse of scramblers and quad bikes more comprehensively, with a view to determining responsibility and timeframes for implementation of solutions identified.

I am advised that the meeting took account of a range of perspectives on the misuse of scramblers and quad bikes, and also considered the experiences currently being encountered in tackling this matter.

By way of next steps, legal advice will be sought by my Department from the Attorney General’s Office in relation to the interpretation of various pieces of legislation identified at the meeting to determine whether any legislative amendments are necessary to assist in curbing anti-social activity insofar as scramblers and quad bikes are concerned.

My officials also intend to consult further with local authorities in the context of the positive engagement fostered by local authorities with local communities, examples of which include community and youth-centred projects, such as the Dunsink Horse Project and the Mulhuddart Motocross Club. The experiences of local authorities involved in these and other projects will be very informative to my Department in terms of assessing the contribution that such approaches can make to reducing the misuse of these vehicles.

As the Deputy will also be aware, an important element of this issue is the misuse of scramblers and quad bikes by children. I would emphasise that the supply of mechanically propelled vehicles to persons under 16 and 17 (depending on the vehicle) constitute offences under accordance with Section 30 of the Road Traffic Act 2004. In this regard, I am advised that the Road Safety Authority (RSA) intends to run a safety campaign later this year with the aim of discouraging those who may consider purchasing scramblers or quad bikes as Christmas presents for minors. I might add that the RSA targets road safety awareness campaigns at young people throughout the school curriculum.

I remain committed to actively supporting any positive actions that can be pursued to counteract the serious public safety issues associated with the misuse of scramblers and quad bikes.

**Immigration Controls**

190. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the criteria used by immigration officers for carrying out additional checks including interviews in respect of persons arriving at airports here and who have a passport from another EU member state; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18846/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** A European Union citizens in possession of a valid national identity card or passport as evidence of his or her nationality and identity may not be refused entry to the State subject to restrictions only for reasons of public policy, public security or public health.

Immigration Officers are required to establish the validity of travel documents presented to
them for entry to the State. Section 11 of the Immigration Act, 2004 (as amended by the Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2011) requires that every person landing in the State shall provide their passport or other equivalent document on request, and provide such information in such manner as the immigration officer may reasonably require.

Many nationals of European Union Member States choose to travel using their national identity card. Unfortunately, it is a regular feature of immigration control that cases arise of persons using false or fraudulently obtained EU national identity cards in an attempt to avail of free movement when they are not entitled to do so. There may be other matters that Immigration officers will wish to establish if they have concerns about the person presenting for entry to the State, including the risk of human trafficking, identification of lost or stolen travel documents, whether the person is the subject of an Irish removal order or poses a risk to the Common Travel Area.

Garda Recruitment

191. **Deputy Eugene Murphy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of new Garda recruits assigned to each Garda station in County Galway in each of the years 2014 to 2017 and to date in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18950/18]

**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 Garda Commissioner that, as of the 31 March 2018, the latest date for which figures are available, the strength of the Galway Division was 575. There are also 31 Garda Reserves and 55 Garda civilian staff attached to the Galway 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 Support Units, the Garda National Economic Crime Bureau and the Garda National Drugs and Organised Crime Bureau.

This Government is committed to ensuring a strong and visible police presence throughout the country in order to maintain and strengthen community engagement, provide reassurance to citizens and to deter crime. To achieve this the Government has put 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. We are making real, tangible progress on achieving this goal.

Since the reopening of the Garda College in September 2014, just under 1,800 recruits have attested as members of An Garda Síochána and have been assigned to mainstream duties nationwide. 22 members of this cohort have been assigned to the Galway Division. Garda numbers, taking account of retirements, increased to 13,551 at the end of 2017 – a net increase of over 600 since the end of 2016.

I am pleased that funding is in place to maintain this high level of investment in the Garda workforce to ensure that the vision of an overall workforce of 21,000 by 2021 remains on track. This year a further 800 new Garda Recruits will enter the Garda College; some 400 of whom have already done so. In total, 800 Garda trainees are scheduled to attest during the year, some 200 of whom attested last month. Further, Garda numbers, taking account of projected retire-
ments, are on track to reach 14,000 by the end of this year.

In addition, a further 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 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 Division, including the Galway Division.

In so far as the allocation of newly attested Gardaí is concerned, this is a matter for the Commissioner. I am assured by the Commissioner that the needs of all Garda Divisions are fully considered when determining the allocation of resources. However, it is important to keep in mind that newly attested Gardaí have a further 16 months of practical and classroom based training to complete in order to receive their BA in Applied Policing. To ensure that they are properly supported and supervised and have opportunities to gain the breadth of policing experience required, the Commissioner’s policy is to allocate them to specially designated training stations which have the required training and development structures and resources in place, including trained Garda tutors and access to a permanently appointed supervisory Sergeant who is thoroughly familiar with their responsibilities under the training programme.

I am advised by the Commissioner that due to the moratorium on recruitment there were no attestations in 2014. The number of newly attested Gardaí assigned to each Garda station in the Galway Division in 2015 to 2017 and to date in 2018 is as set out in the following table.

| DIVISION | STATION | | | | |
| GALWAY | GALWAY | 5 | 5 | 7 | 2 | 19 |
| | SALTHILL | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 3 |
| TOTAL | | 5 | 5 | 7 | 5 | 22 |

*To date in 2018.

Legislative Process

192. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the status of the report arising from the pre-legislative scrutiny on the communications (retention of data) Bill 2017 that proposes to significantly change the Communications (Retention of Data) Act 2011; the progress he has made on considering the report’s recommendations in view of the fact that a case (details supplied) is still before the courts; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18994/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** The report of the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Justice and Equality on pre-legislative scrutiny of the General Scheme of the Communications (Retention of Data) Bill 2017 was received in my private office on 5 February last.
I am considering the recommendations of the Joint Committee to see whether changes are required to be made to the Bill, which is currently with the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel for drafting, with a view to publication once drafting has been completed.

It would not be appropriate for me to comment on a case before the courts.

**Garda Deployment**

193. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of gardaí assigned to each Garda station in each division within the Dublin metropolitan region in 2017 and to date in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19017/18]

**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 the Garda strength of the Dublin Metropolitan (DMR) Divisions on 31 March 2018, the latest date for which figures are available, was 3,443 with 165 Garda Reserves and 264 Garda civilian staff 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 Armed Support Units, the Garda National Economic Crime Bureau and the Garda National Drugs and Organised Crime Bureau.

This Government is committed to ensuring a strong and visible police presence throughout the country in order to maintain and strengthen community engagement, provide reassurance to citizens and to deter crime. To achieve this the Government has put 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. We are making real, tangible progress on achieving this goal.

Since the reopening of the Garda College in September 2014, just under 1,800 recruits have attested as members of An Garda Síochána and have been assigned to mainstream duties nationwide, of whom 831 or 46% have been assigned to the D.M.R. Divisions. I am pleased to say that Garda numbers, taking account of retirements, increased to 13,551 at the end of 2017 - an increase of over 600 since the end of 2016.

I am pleased that funding is in place to maintain this high level of investment in the Garda workforce to ensure that the vision of an overall workforce of 21,000 by 2021 remains on track. This year a further 800 new Garda Recruits will enter the Garda College; some 400 of whom have already done so. In total, 800 Garda trainees are scheduled to attest during the year, some 200 of whom attested last month. Further, Garda numbers, taking account of projected retirements, are on track to reach 14,000 by the end of this year.

In addition, a further 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 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 DMR Divisions.

The information requested by the Deputy in relation to the number of Gardaí assigned to each Garda Station in the DMR in 2017 and on 31 March 2018, that latest date for which figures are currently available, is as set out in the following tables.

### D.M.R. EAST 31 DECEMBER 2017 & 31 MARCH 2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DISTRICT</th>
<th>STATION</th>
<th>2017 TOTAL</th>
<th>2018 TOTAL</th>
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<tr>
<td>BLACKROCK</td>
<td>BLACKROCK</td>
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<td>DUNDRUM</td>
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<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>179</td>
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<td>DUN LAOGLAIRE</td>
<td>CABINTEELY</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>DUN LAOGLAIRE</td>
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<td>114</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SHANKILL</td>
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<td>D.M.R. EAST TOTAL</td>
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<td>378</td>
<td>372</td>
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### D.M.R. NORTH 31 DECEMBER 2017 & 31 MARCH 2018

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<th>STATION</th>
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<tr>
<td>BALBRIGGAN</td>
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<td>COOLOCK</td>
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<td>MALAHIDE</td>
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<td>SWORDS</td>
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<td>CLONTARF</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>67</td>
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<td>HOWTH</td>
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### D.M.R. NORTH CENTRAL 31 DECEMBER 2017 & 31 MARCH 2018

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<td>STORE STREET</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>TALLAGHT</td>
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</tr>
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<th>D.M.R. SOUTH CENTRAL 31 DECEMBER 2017 &amp; 31 MARCH 2018</th>
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<td>DISTRICT</td>
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<tr>
<td>PEARSE STREET</td>
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<td>D.M.R. SOUTH CENTRAL TOTAL</td>
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<table>
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<th>D.M.R. WEST 31 DECEMBER 2017 &amp; 31 MARCH 2018</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DISTRICT</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>BLANCHARD-STOWN</td>
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<td>CABRA</td>
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<td>CLONDALKIN</td>
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<td>RATHCOOLE</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>LUCAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RONANSTOWN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
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Prison Service Staff

194. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when a person (details supplied) will be called for an appeal hearing. [18997/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am advised by the Director General of the Irish Prison Service that the Officer referred to by the Deputy has had a number of sick leave absences recognised as related to incidents at work under the terms of circulars 1/82 and 6/97: Sick leave arising from Occupational Injuries or Disease. He has also received payment of Additional Hours and Allowances for those absences.

The Director General has further advised that the Human Resources Directorate of the Irish Prison Service is not aware of any ongoing appeal process involving this Officer.

Appointments to State Boards

195. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if there are board vacancies in respect of the criminal injuries compensation tribunal; if so, when they will be filled; if he is satisfied regarding the general operations of the tribunal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19022/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** As the Deputy may be aware, the Tribunal is comprised of a Chairperson and six Ordinary Members who are practising barristers or solicitors. They provide their services on a part-time basis to the Tribunal. There are currently no vacancies to be filled on the Criminal Injuries Compensation Tribunal. I am satisfied that the Tribunal is fulfilling its functions under the Scheme.

Jury Service

196. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if travel expenses for jurors will be introduced; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19038/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** The Deputy will be aware that Jury Service in Ireland is given its legislative position under the Juries Act 1976. Section 29 of the Act provides that when an employee or apprentice who is absent from his or her place of work in order to comply with a jury summons, this absence is to be treated as if the person was at work. The Act makes no provision in relation to travel expenses.

The Law Reform Commission’s 2013 Report on Jury Service [LRC 107 – 2013] contains 56 recommendations and covers a broad range of issues relating to jury service such as eligibility for jury service, the categories of persons excusable as of right, the circumstances surrounding disqualifications from jury service as well as juror compensation and expenses.

I am pleased to inform the Deputy that a Working Group has recently been formed to examine the findings of the Report on Jury Service including its recommendations in respect of juror compensation and expenses and the draft Bill provided with that Report.

*Question No. 197 answered with Question No. 189.*
198. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of bench warrants issued in 2016 and 2017; the number outstanding in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19065/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I have requested a report from the Garda authorities in relation to the matters referred to by the Deputy and I will contact him directly when the report is to hand.

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**Programme for Government**

199. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the status of the programme for partnership Government commitment on the introduction of mandatory sentencing for robbery with violence in the home. [18811/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** The Programme for a Partnership Government states that the Government will ask the relevant Oireachtas committee to consider the introduction of mandatory sentencing for robbery, with violence, in the home.

In March 2017, the then Minister for Justice and Equality wrote to the Chair of the Joint Committee on Justice and Equality, inviting the Committee to consider whether the law in this area could be appropriately strengthened by the introduction of mandatory sentencing, taking into account the arguments for and against mandatory sentencing. My officials and I will continue to engage with the Committee on this issue.

The Deputy will be aware that the Court of Appeal has recently set down sentencing guidelines for burglary and robbery and I strongly welcome this development.

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**Workplace Relations Commission**

200. **Deputy Mick Barry** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of Workplace Relations Commission fishing boat inspections that took place from 1 September to 31 December 2017. [18648/18]

201. **Deputy Mick Barry** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of Workplace Relations Commission fishing boat inspections that took place from 1 January to 31 March 2018. [18649/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Pat Breen):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 200 and 201 together.

I would draw the deputy’s attention to the fact that lead policy responsibility for the fishing sector resides with the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine. However, as part of the multi-agency approach to dealing with issues in the fishing sector, the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) undertakes workplace inspections in that sector for compliance with employment law.

Since the introduction in February 2016 of an Atypical Worker Permission Scheme for Non-EEA fishers engaged on whitefish vessels over 15 metres in length, 281 inspections have been undertaken by the WRC.
In the specific periods that the deputy is enquiring about, from 1 September 2017 to 31 December 2017, 15 inspections were conducted and from 1 January 2018 to 31 March 2018, 37 inspections were carried out by the WRC.

Details of inspections by month in the period from June 2016 to date in April 2018 are set out in the following table:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
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<td>Total</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>42</td>
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* To 23 April 2018

Foreign Direct Investment

202. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation if she or her officials have met recently to discuss the implications for foreign direct investment here due to the most recent changes made to tax law in the United States of America. [19086/18]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** My Department and I are aware of the U.S. Tax reform legislation that was enacted shortly before Christmas. This is the most substantial change to the US tax code in 30 years. These reforms include a reduction in the US corporate tax rate and a move to a territorial system.

It is important that we continuously monitor the situation as companies and Governments around the world analyse the implications that may arise from what are complex changes. It is not possible to say at the moment what, if any, the impact might be for Ireland. My officials and I, as well as the IDA, remain in regular contact with companies and with colleagues across Government as the international taxation environment evolves.

Ireland’s corporation tax regime will continue to be competitive while also offering long-term certainty to international business. Our regime is underpinned by substance. **Enterprise 2025 Renewed** reaffirms our focus on export-led growth that is underpinned by innovation, talent and investments in place-making. We cannot predict the future, but we are taking action to deepen resilience across our enterprise base. We will continue as a country to be anticipatory and adaptive to global challenges.

Our Corporation Tax regime, whilst important, is only one element of Ireland’s value proposition for FDI. Business location decisions are informed by a range of factors. Access to the EU market is, and will remain, a key factor in attracting FDI from the US and elsewhere. Other key factors involved in attracting and maintaining FDI here include:
- Talent: we have a talented workforce that is hardworking, flexible and adaptable to change and a first-class education system that helps nurture the future talent required.

- Innovation: we have developed leading edge capabilities in R&D, have a supportive regime for innovation and continuously work with enterprises to gain more investment in high value added research, development and innovation activities.

- We have a proven track record of delivery for enterprise and it is easy to do business here.

- We are English speaking yet can service over 140 languages from Ireland which greatly assists ICT and Financial Services companies in particular.

- Through Project Ireland 2040, the National Planning Framework and National Development Plan, we will focus coordinated investments to ensure that we offer a range of compelling, dynamic and competitive locations for investment throughout Ireland.

I will remain alert and responsive to any changes in the US or global tax environment working with colleagues across Government.

**Residency Permits**

203. Deputy Thomas Byrne asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the position regarding the dependent partner (details supplied) of an Irish citizen in circumstances in which the Irish citizen’s partner wishes to return here for a temporary period; and if in those circumstances, the dependent partner can work for that temporary period here. [18556/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Matters relating to the presence in the State of foreign nationals who are the partners of Irish citizens are a matter for my colleague, the Minister for Justice and Equality. I have been informed that the partner of an Irish citizen may be granted a Stamp 4 residence permission, if they meet the qualifying criteria for the De Facto Partner Immigration Permission (DFPIP) scheme which is administered by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service of the Department of Justice and Equality.

This Stamp 4 permission is granted for one year and allows the applicant to reside and work in the State without the need to seek an employment permit or a business permission.

To qualify for the de facto partner scheme, the applicant and their Irish partner must be living together and they will need to provide evidence of at least two year’s cohabitation immediately prior to the date of their application.

If the foreign national partner does not qualify for the DFPIP scheme, it is open to them to make an application for an employment permit if they have a qualifying job offer.

**Competition and Consumer Protection Commission Reports**

204. Deputy Michael McGrath asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation her views on recent reports from the Central Bank and the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission on personal contract plans; the steps she has taken to date with regard to the plans; her plans in this regard; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18660/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The
The CCPC’s report made a number of recommendations, including to the Department of Finance and the Central Bank. These include a call for PCP agreements to be brought within the scope of the Central Bank’s Consumer Protection Code, thus mirroring the protections afforded to consumers when they take out other forms of credit.

Under the current regulatory framework, those arranging PCP products are not required to check the affordability or suitability of the consumer before selling them a PCP product. This contrasts with the requirements placed upon finance providers when selling other financial products, for example when a consumer takes out a loan to buy a car. While the majority of the financial institutions that offer PCP finance are already regulated by the Central Bank, the Central Bank’s Consumer Protection Code does not currently apply to hire purchase (HP) products or variants thereof such as PCPs.

I understand that the Central Bank publishes car finance data, which contains information on PCP contract numbers and PCP lending amounts. This data is contained in Table A.19 of the Credit and Banking Statistics. Data is currently available for the period between 2012 and December 2017 and I understand that the Central Bank is currently developing a regular publication and reporting of this which will begin in Q3 2018.

I am aware that the recommendations set out in the CCPC’s report are currently under consideration by the Department of Finance and the Central Bank.

A credit intermediary can arrange or offer to arrange a PCP for a consumer. The CCPC is responsible, under the Consumer Credit Act 1995, for the authorisation of credit intermediaries, who arrange financial accommodations for consumers to fund the purchase of goods such as cars, electronics or “white goods”. The CCPC licenses credit intermediaries and keeps an online register of credit intermediaries holding a valid authorisation. The CCPC also deals with complaints about the advertising of credit agreements. However, the CCPC’s remit, derived from the Consumer Credit Act 1995, is limited to this licensing role, as opposed to a more complex and robust supervisory or regulatory role for PCPs.

My Department will give careful consideration to the recommendations and findings in both reports and will continue to engage with officials from the Department of Finance in this regard.

Work Permits Data

205. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of applications for employment permits from asylum seekers that have been made in the past month; and the number of successful applications. [18839/18]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** From February 9th 2018, when section 16(3)(b) International Protection Act 2015 was struck down by the Supreme Court, until the date of entry into force of the EU (recast) Reception Conditions Directive, any eligible international protection applicants can access the employment permit system on the same basis as other non-EEA nationals. The opt-in process, involving formal discussions with the European Commission to ensure compliance with each aspect of the Directive, is expected to take four months to complete. The interim arrangements for the short period prior to the opt-in enables those seeking international protection to access the labour market
through the Employment Permit Acts.

The Employment Permits Section of my Department inform me that one application for an employment permit has been received from an International Protection applicant and it is currently being processed.

The Department of Justice and Equality advise that on 9th February 2018 it established a self-employment scheme for those who have sought International Protection in Ireland that are waiting more than nine months for a first instance decision on their application.

As of the morning of 27th April 2018, the Department of Justice and Equality had received 541 applications for self-employment and 368 of those applications had been granted.

**Health and Safety Regulations**

206. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation if she has had communications with the Health and Safety Authority on updating the Electricity Regulations 2007 on portable appliance testing, in particular section 81(II) (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18877/18]

    **Minister of State at the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Pat Breen):** I have not had any communication with the Health and Safety Authority (HSA) in relation to updating the Regulations on portable electrical appliance testing.

    Regulation 81(c) of the 2007 Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (General Application) Regulations (S.I. No. 299 of 2007) includes the issue of portable electrical appliance testing within its scope.

    This Regulation states:

    “portable equipment which is—

    (i) exposed to conditions causing deterioration liable to result in danger, and

    (ii) supplied at a voltage exceeding 125 volts alternating current,

    is—

    (I) visually checked by the user before use, and

    (II) periodically inspected by a competent person, appropriate to the nature location and use of the equipment”

    Part of the remit of the HSA, under section 57 of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005, is the continuous review of all occupational safety and health legislation on the statute books and to make appropriate representations to the Minister when replacement, amendment or revocation is considered necessary. No such representations have been made, to date, from the HSA in relation to the Regulation 81(c) of the 2007 Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (General Application) Regulations (S.I. No. 299 of 2007)

    I have been informed by the HSA that, given the wide variation in the types of workplaces and the conditions therein, the current wording in the Regulation is suitable and is the most appropriate approach to cover the range of issues involved. The wording in the existing Regulation is also consistent with the general approach to occupational safety legislation that requires that safety provisions be determined by risk assessments relevant to the specific workplace.
The HSA provides extensive guidance on the application of this Regulation on its website through free to download material.

I would advise the Deputy that in any instances where persons may have concerns that the necessary testing is not being carried out in a particular workplace or industry, they can bring this matter to the notice of the HSA through its Workplace Contact Unit (wcu@hsa.ie).

Small and Medium Enterprises Supports

207. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the supports that are available to a small start-up company; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18953/18]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** The Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) are the ‘first-stop-shop’ for advice and guidance, financial assistance and other supports for anyone who intends to start or grow their own business.

In the first instance, the LEOs provide a ‘signposting’ service in relation to all relevant State support available through agencies such as Enterprise Ireland, Bord Bia, Údarás na Gaeltachta, Revenue Commissioners, the Department of Employment and Social Protection, Education and Training Boards, Credit Review Office, and Microfinance Ireland. The LEOs can also offer advice and guidance in areas such as Local Authority rates, public procurement and other regulations affecting business.

There are a range of supports available from the LEOs to assist start-ups. The LEOs can offer direct grant aid to microenterprises (10 employees or fewer) in the manufacturing and internationally traded services sectors which, over time, have the potential to develop into strong export entities. These include feasibility grants (investigating the potential of a business idea) and priming grants (to part-fund a start-up). In 2017, almost €6.5 million in priming grants was approved for 294 new LEO clients across the country. It should be noted that the LEOs do not provide direct grant-aid to areas such as retail, personal services, local professional services, construction/local building services, as it may give rise to the displacement of existing businesses).

The LEOs may be able to offer ‘soft’ supports in the form of training, such as a Start Your Own Business (SYOB) course, or assign a mentor to work with the business proposer. Over 3,700 participants attended SYOB courses run by the LEOs in 2017.

Anyone with a viable business proposal can also use the LEOs to make an application to MicroFinance Ireland, which offers support in the form of loans of up to €25,000 to start-ups with viable business propositions that do not meet the conventional risk criteria applied by the banks. Successful applicants can avail of a more favourable interest rate from MFI if they make their application through the LEO.

There are 31 LEO’s located nationally. Further details and local contact information can be found at localenterprise.ie.

Finally I should mention an online toolkit that provides a range of information on State supports for the business sector the ‘Supporting SMEs’ Online Tool, which is a cross-governmental initiative to help start-ups navigate the range of Government business supports for which they could be eligible. The tool is available at www.supportingsmes.ie. By answering the eight questions in the Online Tool, a small business will, in one location, be able to:
- find out which of the over 170 Government business supports from 27 different Government Departments, Agencies and Initiatives are available to them;
- obtain information on the range of Government supports for accessing credit;
- identify their nearest Local Enterprise Office where they can discuss the outcomes of the guide further;
- download all these filtered results into a document for their further use.

Enterprise Data

208. Deputy Catherine Murphy asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation her plans to conduct a survey to quantify the costs of traffic congestion to businesses in the cities of Dublin, Cork and Galway; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19000/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): In 2017 the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport’s Economic and Financial Evaluation Unit published a report “The cost of congestion, an analysis in the Greater Dublin Area”. The analysis estimates that the cost of time lost due to aggravated congestion is €358 million in the base year (2012).

The National Competitiveness Council’s forthcoming report Cost of Doing Business in Ireland 2018 also provides data on journey times in busy periods. The Report is due to be published shortly.

I do not plan, at this stage, to conduct a survey quantifying the costs of traffic congestion to business.

Jobs Protection

209. Deputy Maurice Quinlivan asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation if she has had contact with a company (details supplied) over the threat posed to the business and to hundreds of jobs due to international sanctions on the parent company; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19083/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The Government is very much aware of the situation involving Aughinish Alumina. I have spoken directly with the company’s CEO and both the Taoiseach and the Tánaiste have met with its senior management. IDA Ireland has also been in regular contact with the firm since details of the sanctions first emerged.

This remains a complex and fluid situation which will continue to evolve over the coming weeks. The Government will continue to monitor developments very closely and will do everything it can to assist the company.

Local Authority Members’ Remuneration

210. Deputy James Browne asked the Minister for Health the guidelines regarding travel expenses for local authority members who are also members of the HSE regional health forums in view of their additional travel burden; and if he will make a statement on the matter.
Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Section 42 of the Health Act 2004 provided for the setting up of a system of four Regional Health Forums.

Section 42(9) provides for the travel expenses and states that a member of a regional health forum, or a committee established by such forum, may be paid by the Health Service Executive travelling and subsistence allowances in accordance with such scales as may, from time to time, be approved by this Department, with the consent of the Minister for Finance.

### Treatment Abroad Scheme

211. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health if there is a reimbursement option open to a person (details supplied) following a procedure; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18552/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The HSE operates two schemes which facilitate patients accessing treatments abroad. The first is the Treatment Abroad Scheme (TAS) which applies where the treatment is not available in the Irish Republic hospital system.

The second is under the Cross Border Directive (CBD) and reimburses patients for treatments received in another EU/EEA Member State where the treatment is one which is provided in Ireland. The HSE provides information for patients on the CBD and TAS on its website which can be accessed at http://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/1/schemes and also by phone at 056 7784551.

The Deputy should advise their constituent to contact this HSE office to discuss the possibility of availing of either of the schemes.

### HSE Properties

212. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 930 of 17 April 2018, the number of bids submitted; if there is a time limit on the sale of the property; when it first was put up for sale; the active seller; if it is unsold, if this building can be offered to the community; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18554/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As the Health Service Executive is responsible for the management of the health care infrastructure estate, the Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in relation to the sale of Keadue Health Centre, County Roscommon.

### Hospital Appointments Status

213. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Health the status of hip replacement surgery for a person (details supplied); and when the individual can expect a date for the surgery to be performed in St. James’s Hospital. [18559/18]

**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.

Primary Care Strategy

214. Deputy Eoin Ó Broin asked the Minister for Health when parents’ representatives will be included on the primary care steering group; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18567/18]

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.

HSE Reviews

215. Deputy Eoin Ó Broin asked the Minister for Health if the policy of in loco parentis will be reviewed in view of the impact this rule is having on families caring for children or adults with significant disabilities and special needs [18568/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): 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.

Paediatric Services

216. Deputy Eoin Ó Broin asked the Minister for Health the number of children on the waiting list to be assessed and treated, respectively, for juvenile arthritis at Our Lady’s Children’s Hospital, Crumlin; the number of paediatric rheumatologists employed by the HSE; his plans to increase this to the required number, six; and his plans to bring the treatment time down from three years to six months, as recommended by the World Health Organization. [18569/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I am aware that there are challenges in meeting the growing demand for paediatric rheumatology services, and that the Health Service Executive is working towards improving access to such services. In relation to current rheumatology service provision and the number of children on the waiting list to be assessed and treated, as this is a service matter, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond to you directly as soon as possible.

Hospitals Funding
217. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Health if funding has been allocated for essential upgrade works at Falcarragh Community Hospital, County Donegal; if so, when this funding will be made available; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18582/18]

**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.

**Home Care Packages**

218. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health his plans to remove the in loco parentis clause from all HSE homecare nursing packages for sick children; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18585/18]

**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.

**Medicinal Products Reimbursement**

219. **Deputy Darragh O’Brien** asked the Minister for Health the status of the reimbursement of the drug Ocrevus; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18587/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The HSE has statutory responsibility for medicine pricing and reimbursement decisions, in accordance with the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013. As Minister for Health, I do not have any statutory power or function in relation to the reimbursement of medicines. The Act specifies the criteria for decisions on the reimbursement of medicines.

In line with the 2013 Act, if a company would like a medicine to be reimbursed by the HSE pursuant to the Community Drugs scheme, the company must first submit an application to the HSE to have the new medicine added to the Reimbursement List.

As outlined in the IPHA agreement, and in line with the 2013 Act, the HSE will decide, within 180 days of receiving the application (or a longer period if further information is sought from the company), to either add the medicine to the reimbursement list or agree to reimburse it as a hospital medicine, or refuse to reimburse the medicine. HSE decisions on which medicines are reimbursed by the taxpayer are made on objective, scientific and economic grounds, on the advice of the National Centre for Pharmacoeconomics (NCPE). The NCPE conducts health technology assessments (HTAs) for the HSE, and makes recommendations on reimbursement to assist HSE decisions. The NCPE uses a decision framework to systematically assess whether a drug is cost-effective as a health intervention. The HSE strives to reach a decision in as timely a manner as possible. However, because of the significant monies involved, it must ensure that the best price is achieved, as these commitments are often multi-million euro investments on an on-going basis. This can lead to a protracted deliberation process.

I have been informed that Ocrelizumab for the treatment of adult patients with early primary progressive multiple sclerosis (PPMS) in terms of disease duration and level of disability, and with imaging features characteristic of inflammatory activity and for the treatment of adult patients with relapsing forms of multiple sclerosis (RMS) with active disease defined by clinical or imaging features is currently undergoing a full pharmacoeconomic assessment by the NCPE.
220. Deputy Joan Collins asked the Minister for Health the way in which a person is referred to the NTPF scheme; if it is the doctor or consultant who refers the person; the length of time they must be on the waiting list before being referred; and the type of health issues that are referred to the NTPF. [18593/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Improving waiting times for hospital procedures is a key commitment in the Programme for Government and in 2018 €50 million was allocated to the NTPF to provide treatment for patients.

The recently launched Inpatient/Day Case Action Plan outlines the combined impact of HSE and NTPF activity in 2018 to reduce the number of patients waiting for treatment. Under the Plan, the NTPF will outsource 20,000 inpatient day cases, while the HSE will deliver 1.14 million hospital operations or procedures. This will mean that by the end of 2018 we will expect to see a significant reduction in the number waiting for a procedure to under 70,000, from a peak of 86,100 in July 2017.

There are seven high volume procedures that are the focus of the NTPF funded treatments, specifically cataracts, hip/knee replacements, tonsils, angiograms, cystoscopies, skin lesions and varicose veins. All patients who are clinically suitable for outsourcing waiting more than 9 months will be offered treatment in 2018 for targeted high volume procedures. For patients who are waiting longest for other procedures, the NTPF and HSE will work together to identify the requirements, develop treatment plans, and where possible offer treatments from within existing resources.

In terms of treatment offers, the NTPF authorises public hospitals to offer outsourced treatment to clinically suitable long waiting patients who are on an inpatient/day case waiting list for surgery. These are patients who have been referred on to such a list following clinical assessment by a consultant/specialist at an outpatient clinic. NTPF authorisations are made in respect of the longest waiting patients first.

Decisions regarding the appropriate care pathway for an individual patient will be a matter for their treating clinician.

Hospital Waiting Lists

221. Deputy Joan Collins asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will have an operation; and if they can be referred to the NTPF scheme. [18596/18]

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.
The recently launched Inpatient/Day Case Action Plan outlines the combined impact of HSE and NTPF activity in 2018 to reduce the number of patients waiting for treatment to below 70,000 in 2018. The Action Plan commits to offering treatment to all patients of high-volume procedures - specifically cataracts, hip/knee replacements, tonsils, angiograms, skin lesions and varicose veins - who are clinically suitable for outsourcing and who have been waiting more than 9 months for treatment.

The NTPF authorises public hospitals to offer outsourced treatment to clinically suitable long waiting patients who are on an inpatient/day case waiting list for surgery. These patients would have been referred on to such a list following clinical assessment by a consultant/specialist at an outpatient clinic. The NTPF advise that they cannot discuss details of individual patients. NTPF authorisations are made in respect of the longest waiting patients first.

In respect to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

Hospital Appointments Status

222. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) in County Donegal will receive an appointment for an assessment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18602/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly):** As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Hospital Appointments Status

223. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will receive a hospital appointment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18614/18]

**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.

Hospital Appointments Status

224. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied)
will receive a hospital appointment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18615/18]

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.

Hospital Waiting Lists

225. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Minister for Health if surgery required for a person (details supplied) will be expedited; the waiting time for same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18620/18]

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.

Hospital Appointments Status

226. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** 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. [18624/18]

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 Services**

227. *Deputy Brian Stanley* asked the Minister for Health if a decision has been made regarding the funding of a new nursing home (details supplied) in County Laois; if a preliminary design has been completed; and the estimated cost of the project. [18626/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly):** As the Health Service Executive is responsible for the delivery of health care infrastructure projects, the Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in relation to the development of a nursing home in Mountmellick.

**Hospital Transfers**

228. *Deputy Pearse Doherty* asked the Minister for Health if a person (details supplied) in County Donegal will be transferred from Our Lady’s Hospital, Manorhamilton to local rheumatology services at Letterkenny University Hospital with a view to continue receiving the appropriate medical treatment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18636/18]

**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.

**Home Care Packages Administration**

229. *Deputy Alan Farrell* asked the Minister for Health the action being taken to remove the in loco parentis clause for home-care nursing packages for sick children in view of the adverse impact it is having for families in many cases; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18644/18]

**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 Funding**

230. *Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan* asked the Minister for Health the extent of funding to an organisation (details supplied) in 2017 and to date in 2018. [18656/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne):** As this is a
service matter, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

Orthodontic Services Waiting Lists

231. Deputy Jim O’Callaghan asked the Minister for Health the reason priority patients on the orthodontic waiting list are not being seen within one year; if the waiting list initiative for orthodontic treatment will be revised in order that priority patients are afforded treatment within one year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18657/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply to the Deputy.

Health Services Staff Recruitment

232. Deputy Peter Burke asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will be replaced; the timeframe for same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18673/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service issue, I have referred it to the HSE for a direct reply to you, as soon as possible.

Mental Health Services

233. Deputy James Browne asked the Minister for Health the CHOs that do not make individual placement support available to their mental health services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18680/18]

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.

Laboratory Facilities

234. Deputy James Browne asked the Minister for Health the position regarding the provision of PCI cardiac care at University Hospital Waterford; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18684/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Following an independent review of the need for a second cath lab in University Hospital Waterford (UHW), the Herity report concluded that the needs of the effective catchment population for Waterford University Hospital could be accommodated within a single cath lab. Funding has been provided to support extension of the existing cath lab operating hours to 12 weekly sessions per week, or by 20%, as recommended in the Herity Report. Recruitment efforts to support this service extension are ongoing.

In the interim, a mobile cath lab service has been provided. The mobile cath lab was initially deployed in October 2017 and last week I directed that it should stay in place for a further number of weeks to allow time for UHW to complete recruitment of the additional staff required for the service extension to the existing cath lab.
A modular cath lab has also been proposed, as an interim solution pending the outcome of the National Review of Specialist Cardiac Services, and the Department of Health is currently examining this proposal at my request.

A national review of specialist cardiac services is underway, which aims to achieve optimal patient outcomes at population level with particular emphasis on the safety, quality and sustainability of the services that patients receive by establishing the need for an optimal configuration of a national adult cardiac service. In terms of scope, the National Review will cover scheduled and unscheduled hospital-based services for the diagnosis and treatment of cardiac disease in adults. The Steering Group for the review held its first meeting on 31 January last. As set out in the National Development Plan 2018-2027, investment in cardiac catheterisation laboratories and other cardiac services infrastructure nationally will be informed by the outcome of the National Review.

**Hospital Appointments Status**

235. **Deputy Fiona O’Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health the status of a hospital appointment for a person (details supplied). [18690/18]

**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.

**Hospital Waiting Lists Data**

236. **Deputy Fiona O’Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health the number of patients waiting for outpatient surgery in Our Lady’s Children’s Hospital who have had their initial appointments changed to a later date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18691/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Reducing waiting time for patients for hospital operations and procedures is a key priority for the Government. In April the Inpatient and Day Case Action Plan was published to reduce the overall number of patients waiting for treatment. This is a joint Action Plan with the HSE delivering 1.14 million hospital operations or procedures and the NTPF delivering 20,000 Inpatient Day Case treatments and 4,000 Gastro Intestinal Scopes.

The Outpatient Waiting List remains a significant challenge to be addressed in 2018. Each year, 3.3 million patients attend Hospital Outpatient clinics for appointments. A number of steps are being taken to reduce outpatient waiting lists, including a national waiting list valida-
tion project by the HSE, to ensure the accuracy of lists.

In addition, the HSE has commenced development of an Outpatient Action Plan for 2018. It will work with the NTPF and the Department of Health to finalise a joint plan focused on improving overall use of resources to tackle long patient waiting times and ensuring timely access to treatment and care for patients.

In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

**Hospital Waiting Lists Data**

237. Deputy Fiona O’Loughlin asked the Minister for Health the number of patients waiting for outpatient surgery in Temple Street Children’s University Hospital who have had their initial appointments changed to a later date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18692/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Reducing waiting time for patients for hospital operations and procedures is a key priority for the Government. In April the Inpatient and Day Case Action Plan was published to reduce the overall number of patients waiting for treatment. This is a joint Action Plan with the HSE delivering 1.14 million hospital operations or procedures and the NTPF delivering 20,000 Inpatient Day Case treatments and 4,000 Gastro Intestinal Scopes.

The Outpatient Waiting List remains a significant challenge to be addressed in 2018. Each year, 3.3 million patients attend Hospital Outpatient clinics for appointments. A number of steps are being taken to reduce outpatient waiting lists, including a national waiting list validation project by the HSE, to ensure the accuracy of lists.

In addition, the HSE has commenced development of an Outpatient Action Plan for 2018. It will work with the NTPF and the Department of Health to finalise a joint plan focused on improving overall use of resources to tackle long patient waiting times and ensuring timely access to treatment and care for patients.

In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

**Hospital Waiting Lists Data**

238. Deputy Fiona O’Loughlin asked the Minister for Health the number of patients waiting for outpatient surgery in Tallaght hospital who have had their initial appointments changed to a later date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18693/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Reducing waiting time for patients for hospital operations and procedures is a key priority for the Government. In April the Inpatient and Day Case Action Plan was published to reduce the overall number of patients waiting for treatment. This is a joint Action Plan, with the HSE delivering 1.14 million hospital operations or procedures and the NTPF delivering 20,000 Inpatient Day Case treatments and 4,000 Gastro Intestinal Scopes.

The Outpatient Waiting List remains a significant challenge to be addressed in 2018. Each year, 3.3 million patients attend Hospital Outpatient clinics for appointments. A number of
steps are being taken to reduce Outpatient waiting lists, including a national waiting list validation project by the HSE, to ensure the accuracy of lists.

In addition, the HSE has commenced development of an Outpatient Action Plan for 2018. It will work with the NTPF and the Department of Health to finalise a joint plan focused on improving overall use of resources to tackle long patient waiting times and ensuring timely access to treatment and care for patients.

In relation to your particular query, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

**General Practitioner Services**

239. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the impending threatened closure of a general practitioner practice (details supplied) in County Mayo; if his attention has been further drawn to the vast geographical area covered by this practice; if his Department has advertised for the vacancy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18701/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

**HSE Staff Recruitment**

240. **Deputy Darragh O’Brien** asked the Minister for Health when vacancies for an occupational therapist, a physiotherapist and a speech and language therapist who are leaving their posts or going on maternity leave in north County Dublin will be filled; the plans the HSE has to maintain the function and service of the early intervention team; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18702/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose, and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy’s question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

**Hospital Appointments Status**

241. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Minister for Health the status of a hospital appointment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18703/18]

**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.

**Hospital Transfers**

242. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) in County Louth will receive a transfer from Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital, Drogheda to the National Rehabilitation Hospital. [18704/18]

**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 issue, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

**Hospital Beds Data**

243. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the number of beds in the National Rehabilitation Hospital. [18705/18]

**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 issue, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

**Hospital Waiting Lists Data**

244. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons waiting for a bed in the National Rehabilitation Hospital. [18706/18]
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 issue, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

Hospital Waiting Lists Data

245. Deputy Gerry Adams asked the Minister for Health the number of persons in County Louth waiting for a bed in the National Rehabilitation Hospital. [18707/18]

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 issue, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

Hospital Facilities

246. Deputy Gerry Adams asked the Minister for Health the capacity in the redeveloped National Rehabilitation Hospital; and when this facility will become operational. [18708/18]

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 issue, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

Paediatric Services

247. Deputy James Lawless asked the Minister for Health his plans to improve the services available for children with spina bifida who are required to attend for medical services in Our Lady’s Children’s Hospital, Crumlin; the timeframe for the improvement and provision of services; and if the services available in the hospital will be on par with those available for children with the condition in Temple Street Children’s University Hospital. [18709/18]
Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The HSE National Service Plan 2018 includes a commitment to continue the development of urology services for children with spina bifida.

In relation to improving these services for children, as it is a service matter, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond to you directly as soon as possible.

Treatment Benefit Scheme Data

248. Deputy John Brassil asked the Minister for Health the number of persons who have availed of the travel abroad scheme for ophthalmology treatment in 2017 and to date in 2018, from the CHO4 area; the subsequent effect on ophthalmology waiting lists in the CHO4 area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18715/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The HSE has been asked to reply directly to the Deputy on this matter.

Occupational Therapy Waiting Lists

249. Deputy Seán Crowe asked the Minister for Health if a person (details supplied) was informed by Chamber House in 2016 that an appointment for speech and language therapy would be available in March 2018 and may now take another year; when this child will receive supports that now include occupational therapy and behavioural therapy; the reason for the delay; and the steps being taken to resolve this delay for children with special needs in this catchment area. [18717/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose, and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy’s question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

Hospital Beds Data

250. Deputy Gerry Adams asked the Minister for Health the number of beds allocated in the National Rehabilitation Hospital for persons with an acquired brain injury for the past five years, in tabular form. [18720/18]

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 issue, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

Medical Inquiries

251. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Health the status of the Irish Medical Council investigation into a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18737/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Under the Medical Practitioners Act 2007, the Medical Council is the statutory body charged with responsibility for the registration and regulation of medical practitioners in the State. Disciplinary matters concerning registered medical practitioners are entirely a matter for the Council. I have no role in relation to such matters, as I am precluded by section 9 of the Act from giving policy directions to the Council in relation to the performance of its functions in the area of complaints concerning registered medical practitioners.

I have been informed by the Medical Council that this matter is still under investigation. Accordingly I am not in a position to comment.

Medical Negligence Cases

252. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Health his views on whether he has a duty of care with regard to a person (details supplied); his further views on whether there is an onus on him to obtain a resolution for the care of the person; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18738/18]

**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.

As this is a service issue, I have asked the HSE to reply to you directly.

Autism Incidence

253. **Deputy Darragh O’Brien** asked the Minister for Health the number of children up to 18 years of age who have been assessed and diagnosed with autism in north County Dublin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18745/18]

254. **Deputy Darragh O’Brien** asked the Minister for Health the number of children with autism up to 18 years of age who are receiving the relevant appropriate supports in north County Dublin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18746/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 253 and 254 together.

The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in ac-
cessing 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.

**HSE Properties**

255. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Health if he will request the HSE to review the traffic arrangements at a site (details supplied) under its control in view of the danger it is posing to customers and residents of the area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18757/18]

**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.

**Primary Care Centres Provision**

256. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Health when a primary care unit proposed and agreed in Curlew Road, Drimnagh, Dublin 12 will be cleared by the HSE for funding to commence its build. [18768/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As the Health Service Executive is responsible for the delivery of health care infrastructure projects, the Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in relation to the development of a primary care centre in Drimnagh.

**National Treatment Purchase Fund**

257. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health the way in which a person (details supplied) can avail of the National Treatment Purchase Fund for an ophthalmology procedure; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18771/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Improving waiting times for hospital procedures is a key commitment in the Programme for Government and in 2018, €50 million was allocated to the NTPF to provide treatment for patients. The recently launched Inpatient/Day Case Action Plan outlines the combined impact of HSE and NTPF activity in 2018 to reduce the number of patients waiting for treatment to below 70,000 in 2018.

The action plan places a particular focus on cataract surgery and commits to offering treatment to all cataract patients who are clinically suitable for outsourcing and who have been waiting more than nine months for treatment.

In respect of the work of the NTPF, the NTPF authorises public hospitals to offer outsourced treatment to clinically suitable long waiting patients who are on an inpatient/day case waiting list for surgery, having been referred on to such a list following clinical assessment by a consultant/specialist at an outpatient clinic. The NTPF advise that they cannot discuss details of individual patients. NTPF authorisations are made in respect of the longest waiting patients.
first. In respect of Ophthalmology, the NTPF are currently authorising patients who will be nine months waiting by June 2018.

In all cases, the appropriate care pathway of an individual patient remains a decision for their treating clinician.

In relation to the particular matter raised by the Deputy, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

**Nursing Homes Support Scheme Review**

258. **Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Health the status of the fair deal nursing home scheme (details supplied) which is due to be amended. [18774/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly):** My Department has been advancing work on this matter and having regard for this complex issue and for the sensitivities of the scheme I requested legal advice from the office of the Attorney General regarding potential changes to the legislation that will address this matter.

The Department has received this advice and is exploring the policy and legislative changes necessary and any potential impacts as a result of amending the scheme. A memo for Government on this issue will be brought forward shortly and subject to Government approval and the drafting process, I then hope to bring forward these legislative proposals thereafter.

**Hospital Staff Data**

259. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the estimated full year cost of implementing the framework for safe nurse staffing and skill mix in all acute hospital settings; the number of additional nursing staff, that is, whole-time equivalent that would be required for the implementation of the framework in all acute hospital settings; and the number of additional health care assistants, that is, whole time equivalent required for same. [18776/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I was delighted to launch the final report on the “Framework for safe Nurse staffing and Skill mix in General, Specialist Medical and Surgical care settings in acute Adult hospitals in Ireland” on 16 April 2018. This framework sets out for the first time a methodology for calculating the staffing requirement and skill mix needed in our specialist medical and surgical wards in adult hospitals.

The framework was developed based on international research, consultation with key stakeholders and was piloted in three hospitals. Results for the pilots showed significant benefits for both patients and staff. Benefits for patients included reduced length of stay, increased quality of care and increased satisfaction with the care received. Staff reported an increase in job satisfaction and reduced absenteeism with a corresponding reduction in agency costs.

The next step is to develop a national implementation plan for incremental roll out across our hospitals. While it will determine the whole time equivalent of nurses and care assistants required, the unique point about the framework is that it is underpinned by the assessment of individual patient need, monitoring patient outcomes, staff and patient experience as well as assessment of required nursing hours. Therefore accurate costings will only become available when the implementation plan is developed.
Medical Aids and Appliances Provision

260. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Minister for Health the reason for excluding persons over 21 years of age with type 1 diabetes from accessing the FreeStyle Libre blood glucose monitor; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18789/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Under the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013, the HSE has statutory responsibility for the administration of the community drug schemes; therefore, the matter has been referred to the HSE for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

Hospital Charges

261. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Questions Nos. 157 of 13 December 2017 and 121 of 24 January 2018, if his officials have examined the matter and provided him with advice following his receipt of the petition in favour of removing the inpatient day case charge for haemochromatosis patients; if a decision will be made on this issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18790/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** My Department is currently considering the issue of the application of the public in-patient charge of €80 for venesection in acute hospitals as well as broader issues in relation to the treatment of patients with Hereditary Haemochromatosis. In this context, a meeting involving relevant personnel in the HSE and the Department of Health is being arranged.

Energy Schemes Data

262. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Health if his Department has undertaken an assessment of results arising for respiratory disease sufferers that have benefitted from the warmth and well-being scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18794/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

Medical Inquiries

263. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Minister for Health the outcome of reviews and investigations by organisations (details supplied) and the measures that were put in place to ensure a similar situation does not recur; if the surgery required by the person will be expedited in view of their experience with the initial surgery; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18817/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Under the Medical Practitioners Act 2007, the Medical Council is the statutory body charged with responsibility for the registration and regulation of medical practitioners in the State. Disciplinary matters concerning registered medical practitioners are entirely a matter for the Council. I have no role in relation to such matters, as I am precluded by section 9 of the Act from giving policy directions to the Council in relation to the performance of its functions in the area of complaints concerning registered medical practitioners.
I have been informed by the Medical Council that this matter is still under investigation. Accordingly I am not in a position to comment.

As the Saolta University Healthcare Group comes under the remit of the Health Service Executive (HSE), I have referred this to the HSE for direct reply to the Deputy.

**Medical Aids and Appliances Provision**

264. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health if the HSE will fund a hoist for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18823/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply to the Deputy.

**Mental Health Services Provision**

265. **Deputy Seamus Healy** asked the Minister for Health the status of the reopening of acute inpatient psychiatric beds in County Tipperary; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18835/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly):** As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

**Hospital Appointments Administration**

266. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the reason a person (details supplied) has not received an appointment at Mayo University Hospital since being referred in 2007 for a hearing aid and further treatment; when they will receive an appointment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18840/18]

**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 Staff Recruitment**
267. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Health when the HSE plans to advertise the vacant position of public health nurse for Causeway, County Kerry; and if there are other areas in County Kerry without a dedicated public health nurse. [18848/18]

**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 Beds Data**

268. **Deputy Louise O’Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the bed capacity at each community hospital in each of the years 2011 to 2017 and to date in 2018; the number of bed closures which have occurred at each of these facilities during this period; the reason for each such closure; the average percentage occupancy rate experienced at each of these facilities during this period in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18851/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly):** As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

**Disability Services Provision**

269. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 243 of 24 October 2017, the progress that has been made in the provision of accommodation, services and a care package for a person (details supplied) in view of the fact that accommodation offered to date is not suitable for the person’s needs; the timeframe for the provision of the care package; the details of the emergency funding planning meetings regarding this matter in the past six months; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18852/18]

**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 issue, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

**Hospital Staff Data**

270. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Health the number and type of administrative posts in each of the seven hospital groups; the details of the grades of each hospital group; the estimated or actual cost for each hospital group for these administrative grades; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18853/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly on this matter.
Electronic Cigarettes

271. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Health if his Department or the HSE are monitoring the use of e-cigarettes or vaporisers; his views on the increased number of outlets selling these products; if there are restrictions on advertising same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18856/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I have no plans to introduce legislation prohibiting the use of e-cigarettes in public places.

The introduction of workplace smoking ban was based on clear and unequivocal evidence that second hand smoke is harmful to non-smokers. That evidence base does not exist for the aerosol generated from e-cigarettes. However, individual organisations/companies are free to introduce an e-cigarette free policy if they so choose.

The European Union (Manufacture, Presentation and Sale of Tobacco and Related Products) Regulations 2016 (SI No. 271 of 2016) does not place restrictions on the number of retail outlets selling these products. It does however, set the requirements for e-cigarettes and refill containers which include quality and safety, labelling and advertising.

The Government approved the drafting of the General Scheme of a Bill to provide for the introduction of a licensing system and other measures in relation to tobacco products and electronic non-medicinal nicotine delivery systems (NMNDS), including e-cigarettes. The proposed legislation will introduce an annual licensing system for the sale of electronic cigarettes and other non-medicinal nicotine delivery systems. The legislation will also prohibit the sale of NMNDS by persons under 18 years of age and to persons under 18 years of age. The drafting of the General scheme is ongoing.

My Department will continue to monitor the emerging research on these products so as to inform decisions around any future additional regulation in this area.

Hospital Facilities

272. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Health the status of the cystic fibrosis unit in Beaumont Hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18858/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The Programme for Partnership Government contains a Government commitment regarding the development of a dedicated Cystic Fibrosis (CF) Unit in Beaumont Hospital, to be progressed in the context of a CF Model of Care.

This CF Unit capital project will thus be underpinned by the “Model of Care for People with Cystic Fibrosis in Ireland” which is being developed by the National Clinical Programme for Cystic Fibrosis (NCPCF). The Model of Care will set out standards and requirements for the physical and human resources to be provided for treatment of cystic fibrosis patients from a national perspective.

The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform governs the processes surrounding the development of healthcare projects by way of guidelines, principally the Public Spending Code. Further rigour is demanded by, and set out in, relevant EU Directives. All proposed projects must be submitted to the HSE’s Capital and Property Steering Committee for approval and prioritisation prior to inclusion in its multi-annual Capital Plans.

In terms of the progression of the CF Unit capital project I am happy to confirm that it has
been included in the National Planning Framework under Project Ireland 2040, as well as being recommended for inclusion in the capital plan by the HSE National Capital Steering Committee.

Hospital Staff Data

273. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Health the number of vacant registrar posts in each Cork city and county acute hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18859/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter, I have asked the Health Service Executive (HSE) to respond to you directly as soon as possible.

Hospital Staff Data

274. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Health the number of vacant NCHD posts in each Cork city and county acute hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18860/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter, I have asked the Health Service Executive (HSE) to respond to you directly as soon as possible.

Consultancy Contracts Data

275. **Deputy Louise O’Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the amount spent by the HSE and his Department for reports by external companies in each of the years 2011 to 2017 and to date in 2018, by report; the cost of each; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18868/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The Department does not collect data in a manner which would allow the Deputy’s question to be answered in full. Published reports for the years in question are available on the Department’s website at: 

health.gov.ie/publications-research/publications/.

Presented in the table are details from the Department’s A7 expenditure for consultant reports commissioned by the Department from March 2011 to December 2016 together with associated costs. Details on expenditure for 2017 and to date in 2018 will be collated and forwarded to the Deputy when available. I have referred the question to the HSE for direct reply to the Deputy in relation to its expenditure.

It is the policy in my Department only to engage the services of external consultants where it is felt to be appropriate and cost-effective, taking account of Government decisions and policy including procurement protocols on the matter. Should the Deputy have a particular report for which details are required please provide details to my office and I will ensure that the matter is investigated further.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Consultants</th>
<th>Report</th>
<th>Cost to Dec 2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>RPS Consulting Engineers Ltd</td>
<td>Report on the findings of the public consultation of the new National Drugs Strategy</td>
<td>€ 11,826</td>
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<td>2016</td>
<td>Stirling University</td>
<td>Research Project to track exposure to alcohol promotion during Euro 2016 for audiences in the UK and Ireland</td>
<td>€ 0</td>
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<td>2016</td>
<td>Institute of Public Administration</td>
<td>Working Better Together – findings of consultation process on business planning and risk management</td>
<td>€ 21,525</td>
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<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Alpha Healthcare Ltd</td>
<td>Working Better Together – findings of Project group consultation and engagement processes</td>
<td>€ 31,817</td>
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<td>2016</td>
<td>The Performance Partnership</td>
<td>Working Better Together Department of Health Learning and Development Strategy including approaches to coaching and mentoring</td>
<td>€ 24,650</td>
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<td>2016</td>
<td>Skills for Health</td>
<td>National evaluation of nursing and midwifery key performance indicators.</td>
<td>€ 20,122</td>
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<td>2016</td>
<td>Research Matters</td>
<td>Report on the Newborn Screening Archive Forum (27 October 2016)</td>
<td>€ 12,116</td>
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<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>UCC</td>
<td>Research on Teaching of evidence based practice in Ireland</td>
<td>€ 6,174</td>
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<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Centre for Effectiveness Services</td>
<td>Training and resources in Implementation Science for National Clinical Guidelines</td>
<td>€ 6,225</td>
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<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>UCD</td>
<td>Prevalence of pain and constipation in patients attending Cancer Centres in Ireland: a national survey</td>
<td>€ 2,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Milliman</td>
<td>Report on incorporating DRGs into the Irish Risk Equalisation Scheme</td>
<td>€ 39,497</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Consultants</td>
<td>Report</td>
<td>Cost to Dec 2016</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>University College Cork</td>
<td>Baseline research to inform update of NCEC NCG No. 2 and No. 3</td>
<td>€ 4,711</td>
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<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>DCU</td>
<td>Development of a framework for patient and public involvement in NCEC’s Clinical effectiveness process</td>
<td>€ 8,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>UCC, UCD, NUIG</td>
<td>Publication of a policy on future community nursing and midwifery, public health nursing and related support grades within the context of health reform</td>
<td>€ 24,533</td>
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<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>DCU</td>
<td>Patient Engagement in the governance and development of national clinical effectiveness processes</td>
<td>€ 34,743</td>
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<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Prospectus</td>
<td>Consultation and report to inform the development of a policy on Trauma System for Ireland</td>
<td>€ 23,990</td>
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<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Amarach Research</td>
<td>Alcohol Labelling Research</td>
<td>€ 150,368</td>
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<td>2015</td>
<td>NUIG</td>
<td>Suite of Literature Reviews to support National Clinical Guidelines</td>
<td>€ 159,645</td>
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<td>2015</td>
<td>UCC</td>
<td>Clinical Guideline 2 (NEWS Update, NCG No. 1)</td>
<td>€ 22,743</td>
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<td>2015</td>
<td>ICF Consulting Services/ DKM Economic Consultants</td>
<td>An assessment of the economic costs of smoking in Ireland</td>
<td>€ 49,799</td>
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<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Prospectus</td>
<td>Code of Conduct for Health and Social Service Providers</td>
<td>€ 86,138</td>
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<td>2015</td>
<td>UCD</td>
<td>Provision of an Evidence Review to inform Future Specialist and Advanced Nursing Practice</td>
<td>€ 11,119</td>
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<td>2015</td>
<td>UCD</td>
<td>Clinical Handover Guideline</td>
<td>€ 86,292</td>
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<td>2015</td>
<td>DCU</td>
<td>Management of the Acute Adult Asthma Patient – provision of research</td>
<td>€ 9,973</td>
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<td>2015</td>
<td>DCU</td>
<td>Paediatric Early Warning Score – Pre-implementation research</td>
<td>€ 23,978</td>
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<td>2015</td>
<td>INDECON Economic Consultants</td>
<td>Analysis of potential measures to encourage the provision of Primary Care facilities</td>
<td>€ 143,485</td>
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<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Consultants</td>
<td>Report</td>
<td>Cost to Dec 2016</td>
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<td>2015</td>
<td>DKM Economic Consultants</td>
<td>Analysis of potential measures to encourage the provision of Nursing Homes and Community Nursing Unit facilities</td>
<td>€ 144,586</td>
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<td>2014</td>
<td>DCU School of Nursing</td>
<td>Report to support the Taskforce on Staffing and Skill mix for nursing</td>
<td>€ 7,418</td>
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<td>2014</td>
<td>DCU School of Nursing</td>
<td>Literature Review and Nursing Workforce Evaluation to Support the Taskforce on Staffing and Skill Mix</td>
<td>€ 19,845</td>
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<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Crowe Horwath</td>
<td>Thematic Analysis of Submissions in response to a Public Consultation on the White Paper for Universal Health Insurance</td>
<td>€ 39,176</td>
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<td>2014</td>
<td>NUI Galway</td>
<td>Systematic literature review Maternity Early Warning Score</td>
<td>€ 23,935</td>
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<td>2014</td>
<td>DCU</td>
<td>Systematic literature review Paediatric Early Warning Score</td>
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<td>2014</td>
<td>UCC</td>
<td>Systematic literature review Clinical Practice Guidance</td>
<td>€ 20,712</td>
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<td>2014</td>
<td>Sinéad Shannon</td>
<td>Review of the international evidence and literature on selection criteria for the Outcomes Framework</td>
<td>€ 5,000</td>
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<td>2013</td>
<td>Prospectus Strategy Consultants</td>
<td>Review of staffing Resources and Organisational Structure of the Department of Health</td>
<td>€ 72,940</td>
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<td>2013</td>
<td>Deloitte and Touche Consultants Ltd</td>
<td>Review of the Nursing Homes Support Scheme</td>
<td>€ 61,800</td>
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<td>2013</td>
<td>Matheson Ormsby Prentice</td>
<td>Legal Research and advisory services on the design and implementation of an insurance based health system providing universal coverage in Ireland</td>
<td>€ 123,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Prof Oonagh Walsh</td>
<td>Report on symphysiotomy in Ireland, 1944-1984</td>
<td>€ 49,500</td>
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<td>2013</td>
<td>Ernst &amp; Young</td>
<td>Reports relating to the development of the Programme Management Office (cost includes a range of consultancy services)</td>
<td>€ 79,212</td>
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<td>2013</td>
<td>Dr. Sinead Hanafin &amp; Associates</td>
<td>Review of the Traveller Health Advisory Committee</td>
<td>€ 6,150</td>
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<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Consultants</td>
<td>Report</td>
<td>Cost to Dec 2016</td>
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<td>2013</td>
<td>Prospectus</td>
<td>Overview of the development of the Health &amp; Wellbeing Programme</td>
<td>€ 15,156</td>
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<td>2013</td>
<td>Research Matters</td>
<td>Provision of Research Management Services</td>
<td>€ 74,490</td>
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<td>2013</td>
<td>Institute of Public Health</td>
<td>Analysis re Consultation (Tobacco Products Directive)</td>
<td>€ 5,000</td>
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<td>2013</td>
<td>Professor Hammond</td>
<td>Research on Standardised Packaging- Irish Context</td>
<td>€ 5,000</td>
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<td>2013</td>
<td>CJP Consultants</td>
<td>Preparation of report on the efficacy of minimum pricing and other public policies for alcohol.</td>
<td>€ 31,488</td>
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<td>2013</td>
<td>Advertising Standards Authority of Ireland</td>
<td>Annual Report of the Alcohol Marketing Communications Monitoring Body (AMCMB)</td>
<td>€ 21,115</td>
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<td>2012</td>
<td>McGee Pharma International</td>
<td>Labelling of Medicinal Products in both Irish and English</td>
<td>€ 13,644</td>
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<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Goodbody Stockbrokers and Matheson Ormsby Prentice Solicitors</td>
<td>Further Analysis of Options in relation to the restructuring of the Irish Private Health Insurance Market</td>
<td>€ 62,349</td>
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<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Department of Public Expenditure and Reform with the assistance of PwC</td>
<td>Review of the Department of Health’s Parliamentary and Legislative Processes</td>
<td>€ 18,020</td>
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<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Department of Public Expenditure and Reform</td>
<td>A survey of experience and qualifications in the Department of Health</td>
<td>None</td>
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<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Michael Collins Associates</td>
<td>Supplementary Report and Addendum on Cost Comparison for the Dolphin Review Group</td>
<td>€ 12,423</td>
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<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>John Martin</td>
<td>Further assessment of planning issues in relation to proposed sites for the Dolphin Review Group</td>
<td>€ 6,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Simon Clear</td>
<td>Further assessment of planning issues in relation to proposed sites for the Dolphin Review Group</td>
<td>€ 9,475</td>
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<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>The Department of Epidemiology and Public Health, UCC, in conjunction with the Centre for Health Policy and Management, TCD.</td>
<td>The Efficiency Review of the BreastCheck Screening Programme</td>
<td>€ 71,270</td>
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<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Consultants</td>
<td>Report</td>
<td>Cost to Dec 2016</td>
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<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Mr. Gerard Mullaly</td>
<td>Reforming Chronic Care: Financing and Delivering Integrated Chronic Care</td>
<td>€ 5,227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Mr. Gerard Mullaly</td>
<td>The Integrated Continuing Care System (ICCS): Reforming Elderly Care in Ireland</td>
<td>€ 7,558</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Matheson Ormsby Prentice</td>
<td>Options Appraisal of multi-payer universal health insurance models: Preliminary advice</td>
<td>€ 6,150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Department of Health/SIRA Consulting</td>
<td>Report on the baseline measurement of the administrative burden from the Department of Health (as part of a cross Departmental project coordinated by Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation)</td>
<td>€ 14,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Goodbody Stockbrokers and Matheson Ormsby Prentice Solicitors</td>
<td>Commissioned to undertake are review of the Irish Private Health Insurance Market in relation to the options which may exist for re-balancing</td>
<td>€ 300,080</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Hospital Beds Data**

276. **Deputy Louise O’Reilly** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 402 of 24 April 2018, the number of the 200 additional beds opened in winter 2017-18 that will remain open indefinitely; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18869/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Under the Winter Initiative, 208 beds have opened so far this winter at the following sites:

- St Vincent’s Hospital (22 beds);
- Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital Drogheda (29 beds);
- University Hospital Limerick (17 beds);
- University Hospital Galway (28 beds);
- University Hospital Waterford (18);
- Beaumont Hospital Dublin (20);
- St. James’ / St Luke’s (23);
- The Mater Hospital Dublin (24 beds); and
- Naas Hospital (11);
- Cork University Hospital (2 critical care beds);
- St Luke’s Kilkenny (14).

The HSE has informed my Department that these beds are due to remain open over the course of the full year in 2018, depending on operational requirements.

Addiction Treatment Services

277. Deputy John Lahart asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to a facility (details supplied) in County Dublin and the excellent work carried out by the facility; the funding provided to the facility in the past 12 months; his plans to increase the funding provided; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18871/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne): As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

Nursing Staff Data

278. Deputy Louise O’Reilly asked the Minister for Health the number of nurses in each acute hospital in each of the years 2007 to 2017, by hospital in tabular form. [18872/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly on this matter.

Nursing Staff Data

279. Deputy Louise O’Reilly asked the Minister for Health the number of nurses in each community hospital in each of the years 2007 to 2017, by hospital in tabular form. [18873/18]

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.

Counselling Services Provision

280. Deputy Denise Mitchell asked the Minister for Health the average wait time for persons referred to HSE counselling services after being deemed eligible following their appearance before the Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18882/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Mental Health Services Provision

281. Deputy Seamus Healy asked the Minister for Health when additional inpatient psychiatric beds for children and young persons will be opened (details supplied); and if he will
make a statement on the matter. [18884/18]

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.

**Home Care Packages Provision**

282. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Health the status of an application by a person (details supplied) for a home care package to enable them to be discharged from hospital; and when a decision will issue. [18886/18]

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.

**Maternity Services Provision**

283. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health the status of the introduction of the 20-week anomaly scan at Cavan General Hospital; if it is now open to all women; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18914/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The National Maternity Strategy is very clear that all women must have equal access to standardised ultrasound services. The Strategy will be implemented on a phased basis and this work is being led by the National Women and Infants Health Programme. The Programme’s Implementation Plan for the Strategy includes a number of actions to facilitate the provision by all maternity hospitals/units of dating and anomaly scans to all pregnant women.

Indeed, the issue of anomaly scanning is a matter of priority for the NWIHP and additional funding provided to the Programme for 2018 will facilitate the recruitment of the 28 additional sonographers required to provide 100% access to such a service. Pending the recruitment and necessary training processes, the Programme will continue to work with the six Hospital Groups to assist in increasing access to anomaly scans. In this context, it is expected that the establishment of Maternity Networks across Hospital Groups will assist in the development of a sustainable service model that ensures that all women can access anomaly scans.

In relation to the specific query raised concerning Cavan General Hospital, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

**Hospital Appointments Status**

284. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health the status of an appointment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18917/18]

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.

Mental Health Services Staff

285. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to correspondence regarding recruitment and retention of nurses (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18927/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I am aware of the correspondence from the Psychiatric Nurses Association which was sent to all Dáil Deputies and Ministers, and which refers to the deliberations of the Public Service Pay Commission.

As you already know, the Public Service Pay Commission was established to advise Government on Public Service Remuneration policy. It made its first report to Government in May 2017, which informed negotiations on a successor to the Lansdowne Road Agreement. While the evidence collected by the Commission suggested that there are no significant recruitment difficulties across the public service vocational streams, it found evidence of some recruitment and retention issues in certain specific areas of the public service. These include certain areas of the health sector (including nurses and midwives) and the Defence Forces, as well as senior executive and professional posts in the civil service.

It suggested that ‘a more comprehensive examination of underlying difficulties’ could take place where ‘such difficulties are clearly evident’. The Public Service Stability Agreement 2018-2020, which was ratified by the PNA, provides for such an examination to take place. The aim of the next phase of work by the Public Service Pay Commission is to determine to what extent, if any, issues relating to the recruitment and retention of staff exist within certain sectors of the public service.

The Public Service Pay Commission is taking a modular approach. The first module is looking at health grades - including nurses and midwives. Their report is expected in June and I look forward to reading its findings.

Hospital Appointments Status

286. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health the status of results for a person (details supplied) following their appointment on 28 March 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18928/18]

**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.

Hospital Appointments Status

287. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Health when an appointment for back surgery for a person (details supplied) will be met. [18951/18]

**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 Accommodation Provision

288. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will receive a full-time bed in Castleblayney, County Monaghan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18954/18]

**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.

Nursing Staff Remuneration

289. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health the estimated full-year cost of aligning nursing salaries with those of therapy staff at all points on the salary scale. [18956/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly on this matter.
290. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health the estimated full-year cost of raising the starting salary for nurses to that of the maximum point on the health care assistant scale. [18957/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly on this matter.

### Hospital Services

291. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Health his plans to provide a clinic in Letterkenny University Hospital for the administration of injections for macular degeneration (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18958/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this relates to a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

### Medical Card Eligibility

292. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health the reason the medical card section failed to take into account certain items for the purpose of assessing and determining the eligibility of persons (details supplied) in County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18973/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy.

### Mental Health Services

293. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) in County Donegal will receive a psychiatric assessment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18974/18]

**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 Capital Programme

294. **Deputy Jonathan O’Brien** asked the Minister for Health his future plans for new hospitals in County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18976/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The Government’s new National Development Plan includes a new acute hospital for Cork among its proposals. Further planning to progress investment in this new facility will now be undertaken, including full evaluation of local capacity and infrastructural needs and a framework for decision-making on the optimal location from a clinical and population needs perspective.
It is important to recognise that the National Development Plan is a long-term plan which provides for a large number of health developments across the country, including both national programmes and individual projects, across acute, primary and social care. We must ensure that we carefully plan the use of this capital funding so as to meet the population needs and achieve value for money. Health capital projects and programmes currently underway will continue. As is to be expected with a ten year plan, many proposals, including the new hospital in Cork, are at an early stage and will require to progress through appraisal, planning, design and tender before a firm location, timeline or funding required can be established.

General Practitioner Services

295. Deputy Pearse Doherty asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the withdrawal of a general practitioner service from a facility (details supplied) in County Donegal; the steps he will take to provide support to the service lead in order to ensure the continuation of the service going forward; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18983/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Hospital Staff Data

296. Deputy Peter Burke asked the Minister for Health the number of staff in each of the hospitals in the South/South West Hospital Group in each of the years 2009 to 2017, by category; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18995/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter, I have asked the Health Service Executive (HSE) to respond to you directly as soon as possible.

Services for People with Disabilities

297. Deputy Tom Neville asked the Minister for Health his plans to address the issue raised in correspondence (details supplied) regarding paediatric rheumatology; his views on whether there is a need to have children with Down’s syndrome screened for arthritis; and if the HSE will offer another doctor a contract in which they can continue to screen children for arthritis and hold follow-up clinics for rheumatology appointments and so on. [18996/18]

300. Deputy Tom Neville asked the Minister for Health his plans to provide funding for an additional rheumatology consultant at Our Lady’s Children’s Hospital, Crumlin, to support the existing team and help alleviate the long waiting lists; and when a rheumatology consultant will be appointed. [19004/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 297 and 300 together.

I am aware that there are challenges in meeting the growing demand for paediatric rheumatology services, and that the Health Service Executive is working towards improving access to such services. Any consideration of further funding to support rheumatology service developments has to be considered in the context of service prioritisation and with regard to competing priorities for resources available as part of the 2019 Estimates process.
In relation to current paediatric rheumatology service provision, as this is a service matter, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond to you directly as soon as possible.

**Services for People with Disabilities**

298. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Health his views on whether children with Down’s syndrome need to be screened from birth on an annual basis for arthritis in view of the incidence of the condition in children with the condition. [18998/18]

**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.

**Nursing Homes Support Scheme Applications**

299. **Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Health the status of an application by persons (details supplied) under the fair deal nursing home scheme. [18999/18]

**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.

*Question No. 300 answered with Question No. 297.*

**Hospital Staff Recruitment**

301. **Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy** asked the Minister for Health his plans to recruit additional paediatric rheumatologists to address the number of children on the waiting list to be diagnosed and treated for juvenile arthritis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19005/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I am aware that there are challenges in meeting the growing demand for rheumatology services, and that the Health Service Executive is working towards improving access to such services.

Any consideration of further funding to support rheumatology service developments has to be considered in the context of service prioritisation and with regard to competing priorities for resources available as part of the 2019 Estimates process.

In relation to your query, as this is a service matter, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond to you directly as soon as possible.
302. **Deputy Darragh O’Brien** asked the Minister for Health the steps he has taken to abolish in loco parentis in view of the motion unanimously accepted in Dáil Éireann on 27 March 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19009/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Paediatric Home Care Packages (PHCPs) are in place to support the discharge of seriously ill children from acute hospital into the care of their families. They are designed to maximise a child’s quality of life and developmental opportunities while also helping to keep children out of hospital as much as possible.

The in loco parentis rule reflects the fact that PHCPs are intended to serve as a clinical support and is in place to ensure that a second person will be present in the event of an acute emergency such as respiratory arrest, decanuation of a tracheostomy or status epileptus.

I acknowledge the cross-party concerns raised about the operation of the loco parentis provision and recognise that respite can be an issue for parents of children with complex medical needs. Indeed, the matter is already being examined as part of the Quality Assurance Process for PHCPs that was commenced by the HSE in 2017. This process will inform how PHCPs should be delivered, including the operation of the in loco parentis provision.

Many parents have already contributed to the Quality Assurance Process, and further engagement will take place in the coming weeks and months. Furthermore, the HSE intends to establish a Parental Reference Group that will help shape how care is delivered to children with complex medical needs.

The Government shares the commitment of all Deputies to supporting the families of these children and to ensuring the provision of a service that both works for parents and reflects their expertise in caring for their children.

**Drug and Alcohol Task Forces**

303. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health the status of cutbacks facing a community service (details supplied) in Dublin 11; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19018/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne):** Every effort has been made to protect the budgets of Drug and Alcohol Task Forces in recent years. The overall allocation to Ballymun Drug and Alcohol Task Forces for community-based drugs initiatives in 2018 is in excess of €1.1m, the same amount was provided in 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017.

It is a matter for the Task Force to ensure that its budget is effectively deployed to meet current priorities and locally identified needs, taking into account the changing nature of the drugs phenomenon. Where possible, it is desirable that initiatives funded by task forces are mainstreamed into government funding.

Ballymun Local Drugs and Alcohol Task Force has informed the Department of Health that it has decided to cease supporting breakfast clubs from the end of June 2018 as alternative sources of public funding are available for school breakfasts through the Department of Social Protection’s School Meals Programme. The task force intends to refocus its resources on individuals, children and families with the most acute needs and most risk due to drug/alcohol issues.

The task force will assist schools in the area to apply for funding for breakfast clubs through
this programme. Funding for the school meals programme in 2018 amounts to €54 million, up from €47.5 million in 2017. Some 18,400 more children and 80 newly designated DEIS schools will benefit from September 2018.

I am confident that the food and nutrition needs of children in the community service referred to by the Deputy can be met under this expanded programme.

**Health Services**

304. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health if the circumstances of a paramedic service call-out (details supplied) will be investigated; if a review of the service will be carried out to ensure such cases do not reoccur; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19020/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service issue, I have asked the HSE to reply to you directly.

**Hospital Consultant Recruitment**

305. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 785 of 17 April 2018, the number of the 44 approved neurologist posts that have been filled. [19036/18]

306. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 785 of 17 April 2018, the investment committed for the diagnosis and treatment of neurology related conditions; and the percentage increase or decrease on investment this represents when compared to 2017. [19037/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 305 and 306 together.

As the Deputy is aware, the Model of Care for Neurology was launched by the Director General of the HSE in late 2016. This was developed by the HSE’s National Clinical Programme for Neurology in collaboration with consultants, nurses, health and social care professionals and patient support groups. It aims to address the need for strategic development of neurology services in the provision of better care for these patients.

In relation to the specific queries raised by the Deputy, as these are a service matter, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond to you directly as soon as possible.

**Cross-Border Health Services Provision**

307. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health the status of a payment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19045/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Under the terms of the relevant legislation, Statutory Instruments 203 of 2014 and 65 of 2015, the Health Service Executive operates the EU Directive on Patients’ Rights in Cross Border Healthcare in Ireland, including the reimbursement of patients.

Accordingly the HSE has been asked to examine this matter and to reply to the Deputy as
soon as possible.

Ministerial Meetings

308. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health the reason he is refusing to meet with the family of a person (details supplied); if a meeting will be scheduled; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19046/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As Minister for Health I am always open to meeting individuals and organisations. My Private Office has received a request from the Deputy to meet with the family concerned and it is currently being considered.

Health Services Provision

309. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health if additional resources for persons with a condition (details supplied) will be provided; the reason they cannot access the cross-Border directive for procedures; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19048/18]

**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 the Deputy directly.

Smoking Ban

310. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Health his plans to extend the smoking ban; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19053/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The current legislative framework on tobacco control is the Public Health (Tobacco) Acts 2002 to 2015. Section 47 of the Public Health (Tobacco) Acts prohibits smoking in most enclosed work places. This includes office blocks, public houses/bars, restaurants and company vehicles (cars and vans). The overall purpose of the ban is to limit people from the harms of second hand tobacco smoke. Section 47(7) provides exemptions from the general prohibition in respect of certain places / premises including prisons, nursing homes, non-acute long stay facilities and psychiatric hospitals.

The Protection of Children’s Health (Tobacco Smoke in Mechanically Propelled Vehicles) Act 2014 prohibits the smoking of tobacco in cars where children are present.

The policy document Tobacco Free Ireland (2013) sets a target for Ireland to be tobacco free (i.e. with a prevalence rate of less than 5%) by 2025. Tobacco Free Ireland addresses a range of tobacco control issues and initiatives and contains over 60 recommendations. Some of those recommendations relate to extending the smoking ban on a legislative basis to the campuses of primary and secondary schools and child care facilities. Other recommendations relate to the promotion, on a voluntary basis and in conjunction with key stakeholders, of smoke free environments on the outdoor campuses of third level institutions, health care facilities, Government facilities, sports facilities, playgrounds, parks and beaches. Progress has been made in particular in relation to health care and Government facilities, playgrounds and third level institutions.

The Government recently agreed to support a Seanad Private Members’ Motion seeking the Minister for Health to extend the smoking ban to outdoor commercial public places where food is consumed. It was agreed that the measure would be addressed on the completion of the cur-
rent tobacco control legislative programme as set out in Tobacco Free Ireland and in line with our international legislative obligations. Minister Byrne set out this legislative programme and obligations in detail in the Seanad Debate on this issue on 25th April, 2018.

**Home Care Packages Administration**

311. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Health the status of the establishment of his Department’s new statutory scheme for the financing and regulation of home support services; the way in which he expects the scheme to improve home support services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19054/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly):** As you are aware the Department of Health is currently engaged in a detailed process to develop plans for a new statutory scheme and system of regulation for home care services.

The statutory scheme for home care will introduce clear rules in relation to the services for which individuals are eligible and in relation to service-allocation. For that reason, developing a new statutory scheme will be an important step in ensuring that the system operates in a consistent and fair manner for all those who need home care services. It will also help to improve access to the home care services that people need in an affordable and sustainable way. The system of regulation for home care will help to ensure that the public can be confident that the services provided are of a high standard.

As an initial step in this process, the Department commissioned the Health Research Board to undertake a review of the home care systems in four other European countries. This review, which was published in April 2017, will help us to learn from the experiences of other jurisdictions and will inform the debate and future consideration of approaches to formal home care financing and regulation here in Ireland. I, along with Minister Harris, also launched a public consultation process in July 2017 which closed in October 2017. The purpose of this consultation was to allow all those with views on this topic to have their say, including older people themselves, their families, and healthcare workers. There was a very high response rate to the consultation process with approximately 2,600 submissions received. I intend to publish a report of the findings of the consultation process at the end of May.

It is important to note that a significant amount of detailed work remains to be carried out before final decisions are taken on the form of home care scheme and the system of regulation for these services. This is required if reforms are to be successful, affordable and sustainable.

However, while the new home care scheme is under development, the Department of Health and Health Service Executive (HSE) are continuing efforts to incrementally improve the existing services. The HSE has begun streamlining services in 2018 by bringing together the funding for home help and standard home care packages, which now operate as a single home support service. This new approach will provide significant benefits including making the services easier to understand; streamlining the application and decision-making processes; and facilitating service users to move to changed levels of service as their assessed needs change, without the need for an additional application process.

2018 has also seen a significant increase in the provision of home support services. The HSE’s National Service Plan provides for a target of some 17.094m home support hours to be provided to 50,500 people. This represents an increase of 754,000 hours to 500 more people over last year. In addition 235 intensive home care packages will provide 360,000 home support hours for people with complex needs.
The HSE will also continue to encourage local integration of services and build appropriate care pathways, in particular for people with dementia and complex needs.

Emergency Departments Waiting Times

312. Deputy John Curran asked the Minister for Health his plans to reduce the time persons over 75 years of age are forced to wait in emergency departments; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19055/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Against a background of growing demand for unscheduled care and high acute hospital occupancy rates, Government provided €30 million in 2017 and a further €40 million in 2018 for measures to increase acute hospital capacity and alleviate overcrowding in Emergency Departments. Almost 50% of this funding was used to deliver home support packages and transitional care beds to reduce the incidence of delayed discharges. Furthermore, over 200 beds have been opened this winter and more beds are due to come on stream later in the year.

Notwithstanding the increased level of resources provided, this winter has been particularly difficult for our health services with ED attendances up 3.7% and admissions up 3.3% during the first quarter of the year, as compared to the same period in 2017.

The situation was further exacerbated by Storm Emma and the severe weather that followed. In response to this, I approved a further €5m in emergency funding to provide additional home support packages and transitional care beds to assist the safe discharge of patients who required support to return home following the adverse weather.

In the light of the conclusions of the Health Service Capacity Review that the system will need nearly 2,600 additional acute hospital beds by 2031, I have asked my Department to work with the HSE to identify the location and mix of beds across the hospital system which can be opened and staffed this year and into 2019 in order to improve preparedness for Winter 2018/2019.

As outlined in the Capacity Review, the demographic pressures being experienced by the health service are such as to demand not just additional capacity but continued emphasis on health and well-being initiatives, an improved model of care with a stronger role for enhanced community based services and continued improvement in productivity including in acute hospitals. The Government has approved a record level of capital investment in health at €10.9 billion over the next 10 years. This will provide for a major enhancement of the capacity of our health services to meet demand. Importantly, the accelerated introduction of additional capacity for 2018/2019 will be matched by forthcoming reforms including the publication of a detailed Sláintecare Implementation Plan and the overhaul of the current GP contract.

Finally, a review of the Winter Initiative 2017/2018 is being undertaken, which will inform a 3 year plan for unscheduled care, as well as supporting the provision of additional capacity in Winter 2018/19.

With specific regard to the Deputy’s question on persons over 75 years of age, there are three main programmes focused on prioritising and improving the experience of patients over 75 in the emergency healthcare system.

The Integrated Care Programme for Older People (ICPOP) and the National Clinical Programme for Older People (NCPOP) are developing integrated primary and secondary care services for older people. This involves establishing integrated multidisciplinary teams (MDTs)
in both acute hospitals and CHOs to address the specific needs of older people (especially those who are frail or at risk of frailty); case management within MDTs linked to other services that coordinates and plans care needs across a continuum; and bespoke care pathways with appropriate expertise in older persons’ care.

The Frailty at the Front Door (FFD) programme, which is the assertive case management of frail older patients deployed in acute hospitals (i.e. ED and MAUs) consists of timely identification and screening of older attendees to acute hospitals; comprehensive and early multidisciplinary team assessment; and assertive discharge with a coordinated response to the needs of frail older patients.

National Treatment Purchase Fund Data

313. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons who received treatment under the National Treatment Purchase Fund in 2017 and to date in 2018, by category of treatment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19056/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The information sought by the Deputy has been requested from the National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF). Due to the level of detail required this information is currently being collated.

A response will issue directly to the Deputy as soon as the information is made available from the NTPF.

National Treatment Purchase Fund Data

314. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 396 of 24 April 2018, if it is anticipated that the rate of treatment received by patients through the National Treatment Purchase Fund will continue for the remainder of 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19057/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Improving waiting times for hospital procedures is a key commitment in the Programme for Government and in 2018 €50 million was allocated to the NTPF to provide treatment for patients. The recently launched Inpatient/Day Case Action Plan outlines the combined impact of HSE and NTPF activity in 2018 to reduce the number of patients waiting for treatment.

Taking account of both NTPF and HSE activity in 2018 and depending on, _inter alia_, the level of patient demand, the Action Plan 2018 projects that:

- the number of patients waiting longer than 9 months will fall from 22,500 at end 2017 to 12,500 at the end of 2018.

- for high volume procedures, all clinically suitable patients waiting more than 9 months will be offered treatment in 2018

- the number of patients waiting for GI scopes will fall from 17,600 at the end of 2017 to 16,150 at the end of 2018

In all cases, the appropriate care pathway of an individual patient remains a decision for their treating clinician.
Progress against these targets will be reported upon by the NTPF and HSE throughout the year.

**Cancer Screening Programmes**

315. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health if the NCCP has drawn up a plan for the development of an integrated cancer control and surveillance service for defined population subgroups with an inherited familial predisposition to cancer. [19066/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The deputy’s question relates to service delivery matters and accordingly I have referred his question to the HSE for direct reply.

**Cancer Screening Programmes**

316. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health if an investigation has taken place into the reason for the variation in screening uptake rates in different counties for CervicalCheck. [19070/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The deputy’s question relates to service delivery matters and accordingly I have referred his question to the HSE for direct reply.

**Tobacco Control Measures**

317. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health the details of the legislative controls and restrictions in place for the purpose of regulating the sale, supply and use of hookah instruments for the smoking and vaping of tobacco; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19076/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** A hookah is a water pipe used to smoke tobacco through cooled water.

The current legislative framework on tobacco control is the Public Health (Tobacco) Acts 2002 to 2015. Section 47 of the Public Health (Tobacco) Acts prohibits smoking in most enclosed work spaces. This includes office blocks, public house/bars, restaurants and company vehicles (cars and vans). The overall purpose of the ban is to limit people from the harms of second hand tobacco smoke. The use of the hookah instrument for the consumption of tobacco is prohibited in these areas.

The Public Health (Tobacco) Acts do not regulate the sale or supply of the hookah instrument.

**Home Help Service Provision**

318. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Minister for Health if funding will be provided to a person (details supplied) for home help hours; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19085/18]

**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.

Medicinal Products Availability

319. Deputy Charlie McConalogue asked the Minister for Health the status of the provision of a drug (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19115/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The HSE has statutory responsibility for decisions on pricing and reimbursement of medicines under the community drug schemes, in accordance with the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013.

On 11 July 2014, the Misuse of Drugs Regulations 1988 were amended to allow for certain cannabis-based medicinal products to be used in Ireland. The Health Products Regulatory Authority subsequently granted a marketing authorisation for the cannabis-based medicinal product Sativex to be marketed in this State. It was then open to the holder of that authorisation to make the product available for prescribing in Ireland.

In September 2014, the HSE received an application for the reimbursement of Sativex.

A Health Technology Assessment on Sativex was completed by the National Centre for Pharmacoeconomics (NCPE), which did not recommend reimbursement of Sativex at the submitted price.

The HSE issued the manufacturer with notice of its intention not to reimburse.

In February 2018 the HSE received a new reimbursement application from the manufacturer. A rapid review by the NCPE was completed on the 3 April 2018 and a full pharmacoeconomic assessment is recommended to assess the clinical effectiveness and cost effectiveness of Sativex compared with the current standard of care.

Assisted Human Reproduction

320. Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly asked the Minister for Health the status of his plans for financial assistance for fertility treatment; the criteria attached in this regard; the proposed timeframe for same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19118/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Government approved the drafting of a Bill on assisted human reproduction (AHR) and associated areas of research in October last year. In order to support the commencement of the legislation, officials in my Department will work during 2018 with the HSE to develop a model of care for infertility to ensure the provision of safe, effective and accessible services through the public health system as part of the full range of services available in obstetrics and gynaecology.

Part of this work includes identifying policy options for a potential public funding model for AHR treatment. Once I have had the opportunity to consider these policy options I will bring a Memorandum to Government for a model of public funding for AHR treatment for the Government’s consideration and decision.

It should be noted that any funding model that may ultimately be introduced would need to operate within the broader regulatory framework set out in the AHR Bill and a model of care for infertility.
While IVF treatment is not currently provided by the Irish public health service, there is some support available in that patients who access IVF treatment privately may claim tax relief on the costs involved under the tax relief for medical expenses scheme. In addition, a defined list of fertility medicines needed for fertility treatment is covered under the High Tech Scheme administered by the HSE. Medicines covered by the High Tech Scheme must be prescribed by a consultant/specialist and approved by the HSE ‘High Tech Liaison Officers’. The cost of the medicines is then covered, as appropriate, under the Medical Card or Drugs Payment Scheme. In addition to these schemes, there is a limited specialist AHR service available through the HSE, which provides funding for fertility preservation for cancer patients whose treatment is likely to impact on their future fertility.

Forestry Management

321. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if the condition for a person (details supplied) to replant forestry after felling can be removed in view of the fact that no premium was paid in respect of the plantation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18579/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed)**: Forestry in Ireland operates within a legal and regulatory framework. This is necessary in order to protect forests and also to ensure that forestry operations and activities are carried out in compliance with the principles of sustainable forest management. The obligation to replant felled trees is required under the Forestry Act, 2014 and the Forestry Regulations, SI 191/2017.

Due to the extent of deforestation by the early 20th century, legislation was introduced to regulate tree felling. This has facilitated, in part, sustainable forest management. There is a need to avoid deforestation in relation to economic and social considerations and particularly in an environmental context such as carbon, landscape and amenity considerations. Reforestation after felling is essential to prevent deforestation, which would otherwise counteract the benefits of the initial afforestation, regardless of whether that was grant aided.

Every application for a tree felling licence is carefully assessed to ensure that the tree felling and the required replanting is carried out to the highest standards. All applications are desk assessed by Forestry Inspectors of my Department and where required a field assessment will be carried out. This assessment will include an examination of the proposed replanting and will include certain conditions in this regard, for example, any necessary setbacks from water courses, roads or dwellings.

I understand, the application for a tree felling licence for the person named, is currently being examined by a Forestry Inspector and a decision is awaited.

GLAS Payments

322. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if the remaining 15% of the 2017 GLAS payment will be expedited in view of the fodder crisis and the associated financial pressure affecting farmers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18584/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed)**: Balancing Payments for the GLAS scheme can only commence when the Member State has verified that all eligibility conditions have been met. This is a requirement in the relevant EU Payment
Regulations and is a long-standing EU audit requirement. It is currently anticipated that this
requirement will be met and GLAS balancing payments will commence later this month.

I would encourage any GLAS applicant with outstanding obligations, such as the submis-
sion of a Nutrient Management Plan or a Commonage Management Plan to speak to their
adviser and ensure that this work is completed as a priority. Without the submission of all the
required information applicants will be ineligible for their balancing payment.

Sheep Welfare Scheme

323. Deputy Tom Neville asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a
sheep welfare payment will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will
make a statement on the matter. [18591/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): An applica-
tion was received under the Sheep Welfare Scheme from the person named on 3 February 2017.
Under the terms and conditions of the scheme, applicants to the scheme are required to choose
two actions from various categories appropriate to their flock type.

In the case of this application, only one action was chosen on the application form. There-
fore the application was deemed to be incomplete. An official from the Department contacted
the person named in order to have this application corrected on the 7 June 2017.

The applicant subsequently contacted the Department on 11 January 2018 to correct the
query. The Sheep Welfare application has now been amended and will be processed for pay-
ment accordingly.

Land Parcel Identification System

324. Deputy Robert Troy asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if an
anomaly in the agriculture mapping system (details supplied) whereby maps submitted to the
system do not always correlate when inputted electronically will be addressed; and if he will
make a statement on the matter. [18592/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The same
mapping system is used for both BPS and GLAS to ensure compatibility.

The Land Parcel Identification System (LPIS) stores the land parcel details for all Depart-
ment area-based schemes. The information stored is used for BPS, ANC, GLAS, Organics and
Forestry Schemes. GLAS payments are made based on the Land Parcels that are claimed by
the GLAS applicant in the annual BPS application.

It is an EU requirement that all changes to land are recorded on the LPIS database and any
ineligible land identified is recorded. As changes are recorded on the LPIS database, this may
have a knock-on effect for any area-based schemes.

Fodder Crisis

325. Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if
additional resources have been provided to assist farmers whose herds are restricted and suffer-
Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): My Department operates a Hardship Grant scheme as part of the TB Eradication Programme. The scheme operates from 1 November to 30 April 2018 and is aimed at assisting eligible herdowners who retain and feed animals during prolonged periods of restriction as a result of a TB breakdown. Herdowners meeting the eligibility criteria can apply through their local RVO.

Separately, the Department operates an Early Warning/Intervention System (EWS). Under the EWS arrangements, Department officials are in a position to assist farmers who are seeking the provision/purchase of emergency feed supplies and these requests have been dealt with appropriately. Sufficient resources are available to facilitate the EWS arrangements. The dedicated e-mail address animalwelfare@agriculture.gov.ie and help-line Call Save: 0761 064408 are available to provide assistance and support.

GLAS Payments

Deputy Charlie McConalogue asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when payment will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Donegal in respect of a GLAS payment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18642/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The person named was approved into GLAS 2 with a contract commencement date of 1 January 2016 and has received full payments in respect of the 2016 scheme year including GLAS plus payments.

Administrative checks involving a number of sections within the Department take place on all GLAS claims. All cases must clear validation checks before payment can issue. Department officials are working proactively to complete the checks in this case and once this case clears validations the 2017 advance payment will be made. GLAS payments are being made on a weekly basis.

Knowledge Transfer Programme

Deputy Tom Neville asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when payment will issue to persons (details supplied) in respect of attendance at a group; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18645/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Knowledge Transfer (KT) is one of a suite of measures included under the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 and involves the formation of knowledge transfer groups across the beef, dairy, equine, sheep, tillage and poultry sectors.

Farmer participants attend group meetings and produce a Farm Improvement Plan in consultation with their KT Facilitator. For each year of the three year programme participants receive a reimbursement in the amount of €750 for a primary sector and €375 for a secondary sector where all requirements of the programme have been met.

Work is ongoing to clear outstanding cases on the Knowledge Transfer Programme. Each participant’s application is processed separately and paid independently of other members of the KT Group.

The person named did not meet the minimum attendance requirement at meetings, and a
penalty will thus be applied to her payment. It is expected that payment will issue to the person named shortly.

**Agriculture Scheme Appeals**

328. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the action he plans to take on foot of a decision on an appeal lodged by a farmer (details supplied) in County Galway; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18743/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** My Department notes the decision of the Agriculture Appeals Office in this case and is working now to give full effect to the appeal outcome.

**GLAS Payments**

329. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when all outstanding moneys will issue to a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18761/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The person named was approved into GLAS 2 with a contract commencement date of 1 January 2016 and has received payments in respect of 2016.

The Department is aware of an issue with this case that resulted in the 2017 advance payment not being made. A solution has been identified and work is at an advanced stage to resolve the case. Once implemented the 2017 advance payment will issue. GLAS payments continue to issue on a weekly basis.

**GLAS Payments**

330. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if a GLAS payment for a person (details supplied) will be expedited; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18775/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** A review by the Director of Agriculture Appeals Office of the decision of the Appeals Officer has been requested in this case in accordance with the provisions of the Agriculture Appeals Act, 2001. The Agriculture Appeals Office have indicated that requests for reviews are generally dealt with in order of receipt and that both the Department and the person named will be advised of the outcome when the review has been completed.

**TAMS Applications**

331. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of a TAMS review for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18778/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The person named submitted an application for grant aid under the Young Farmers Capital Investment
Scheme on 8 January 2018.

The application was rejected on 23 February 2018 as the applicant did not meet the requirements of set-up for the first time in farming within five years of the date of receipt of an application under this scheme. The Department records indicate that the applicant was set up on 17 April 2012 which means that they were outside the 5 year period to qualify as a Young farmer under the Terms and Conditions of the TAMS II scheme.

In addition documentary evidence of a grant of full planning permission was not submitted at the time of application.

A review of this decision was requested on 21 March 2018 and a reply to this review issued on 10 April 2018 upholding the original decision to reject the application.

It is open to the applicant to apply for grant aid under the other schemes of TAMS II where the grant rate applicable is 40%.

It is also open to the applicant to submit an appeal of the decision to the Agriculture Appeals Office within 3 months of the date of the decision letter.

Aquaculture Data

332. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of applications received from aquaculture and seafood processing enterprises in County Waterford and research institutions under the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund operational programme’s recent tranche of funding; and when the next round of funding will open for applications. [18827/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** My Department’s €240 million European Maritime and Fisheries Fund Operational Programme is the vehicle for financial supports to the seafood sector up to 2021. The Programme delivers a wide range of supports for aquaculture, fisheries and seafood processing through a suite of 17 schemes.

On 23 April 2018, I announced the first tranche of EMFF grant awards in 2018 to seafood processing enterprises, aquaculture enterprises and research institutions under four EMFF schemes. The details are published on my Department’s website at the following link


There were no applications from County Waterford submitted for consideration under the recent tranche of awards. The four EMFF schemes concerned are open for applications on an open call basis, so any relevant Waterford seafood enterprises may apply to Bord Iascaigh Mhara.

In relation to research institutions, three grants were awarded to University College Cork, Galway Mayo Institute of Technology and the Marine Institute. These projects were awarded €1.3 million in EMFF grants and they concern a feasibility study of upscaling Irish mussel production, development of an autonomous finfish vaccine and technology Development in the finfish sector respectively.

Full details of each of the schemes are available on BIM’s website at the following link - http://www.bim.ie/schemes/.
333. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will report on the engagement between his Department and Enterprise Ireland since the beginning of December 2017 to explore the possibility of making suitable fishery harbour centre properties available for appropriate Enterprise Ireland projects in view of the recommendations by the Oireachtas Committee of Public Accounts in 2016; and if specific potential has been identified at Dunmore East, County Waterford for this purpose. [18828/18]

*Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):* Dunmore East Fishery Harbour Centre is one of six State-owned Fishery Harbour Centres managed and operated by my Department under statute.

Following publication of the Public Accounts Committee Report on the Fishery Harbour Centres in June 2015 my Department began an ongoing engagement with Enterprise Ireland to consider the possibilities of suitable Fishery Harbour Centre properties for potential clients of the agency to facilitate the delivery of appropriate Enterprise Ireland projects.

Since the beginning of December 2017 Enterprise Ireland has been involved with my Department in relation to a specific case in one of the Fishery Harbour Centres. At present, no properties in Dunmore East have been identified as possible locations for a collaboration between my Department and an Enterprise Ireland sponsored project.

334. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of proposals to construct a breakwater extension at Dunmore East, County Waterford to provide shelter for vessels and users of the harbour and scope for enhanced marine leisure activities. [18829/18]

*Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):* Dunmore East Fishery Harbour Centre is one of the six designated Fishery Harbour Centres which are owned, managed and maintained by my Department under Statute.

I am happy to advise the Deputy that in excess of €14 million has been invested in maintenance, development and upgrading works at Dunmore East FHC as part of my Department’s Fishery Harbour and Coastal Infrastructure Development Programme from 2010 to 2017, including the €6 million dredging project in 2015 which has improved conditions for fishing vessels in the harbour and manoeuvrability for fish landings.

This year I allocated further funding of €2.4 million for the ongoing maintenance and development of Dunmore East Fishery Harbour Centre during 2018. Significant works in this year’s capital programme include the completion of the west wharf upgrade works.

In relation to a proposed breakwater at Dunmore East, the Department engaged consulting engineers to examine options for the citing and construction of a breakwater on the west side of the harbour. Wave modelling carried out by engineers in this regard suggests that all the various options would have a negative impact on the sandy coves in the general vicinity.

The Department is conscious of the issues and will keep the situation under review while considering what other options may be possible.

As the Deputy is aware, all developments in the six Fishery Harbour Centres will be consid-
Fishing Industry Data

335. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of commercial fishing vessels registered to owners in County Waterford; and the comparative figure for 2012. [18830/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The Registrar General of Fishing Boats is charged with maintaining a Register of Fishing Boats and with the proper management of the capacity of the Irish fleet.

The Registrar General advises me that the number of commercial fishing vessels registered to owners with an address in County Waterford is currently eighty three compared to ninety five at 31 December 2012.

Greyhound Industry Data

336. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine further to Parliamentary Question No. 1121 of 17 April 2018, if the figures provided by Bord na gCon (details supplied) are for unregistered greyhounds re-homed by the Irish Greyhound Board in each of the years 2010 to 2017. [18967/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** Bord na gCon is a commercial State Body, established under the Greyhound Industry Act, 1958 chiefly to control greyhound racing and to improve and develop the greyhound industry.

Bord na gCon is a body corporate and a separate entity to the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

The question raised by the Deputy is an operational matter for Bord na gCon.

I will request officials in my Department to refer the question to Bord na gCon for direct reply to the Deputy.

Agriculture Scheme Penalties

337. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason his Department will not accept the verbal confirmation from the NPWS that works carried out by a farmer (details supplied) did not damage the special protection hen harrier area; if the cross compliance penalty applied in respect of this damage will be reviewed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19040/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** Under the Terms and Conditions of the Basic Payment Scheme and other EU funded schemes an applicant, as well as meeting the scheme criteria, must also comply with EU regulatory requirements relating to Cross Compliance.

An inspection was carried out by my Department on 30th August 2016. The report of this inspection detailed breaches relating to the cross compliance requirements in respect of the
Statutory Management Requirement (SMR) 2 on the Conservation of Wild Birds. This resulted in a 20% penalty being applied against the Direct Payments Schemes and other EU funded schemes, where applicable.

The breaches identified related to the removal of the peat/topsoil layer from a designated hen harrier site. Prior approval of the NPWS to undertake works on such a designated site is required and in this case no written confirmation that such prior approval had issued was provided to my Department. This written confirmation of prior approval is an essential record in determining whether or not a breach of the requirements has occurred and is also necessary to meet EU audit requirements.

The person named was notified of the decision on the breach on 20th November 2016 and of their right to seek a review of the findings. A review was requested, the outcome of which was to up-hold the original inspection findings. A letter detailing this outcome issued to the person named on 8th March 2018.

If the person named is dissatisfied with this outcome the decision can be appealed to the independent Agriculture Appeals Office, within 3 months. I understand that to date no such appeal has been lodged with that office.

Salmon Hardship Scheme

338. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if the introduction of a comprehensive licence for salmon fishing will be supported for traditional salmon fishermen who have waited 11 years for an initiative addressing the impact of the ban on salmon fishing on their livelihoods; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18586/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Séan Kyne):** Ireland manages salmon stocks on an individual river basis. This management is carried out by Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI), the State Agency with statutory responsibility for inland fisheries. This is based on the fact that each of Ireland’s 147 salmon rivers, river sections, estuaries, etc., has its own genetically unique stock of salmon which migrates to sea as juveniles and returns to the same river in adulthood to spawn and create the next generation of fish exclusive to that river. The Atlantic salmon is a protected species under the EU Habitats Directive with which Ireland’s current salmon management regime complies. In order to align fully with the Directive and the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation (NASCO) principles, the Irish Government closed mixed stock fisheries in 2007, including coastal and offshore fishing for salmon.

The government introduced a Hardship Scheme under which, fishermen active in the commercial salmon fishery could opt to voluntarily cease fishing and undertake not to seek a licence in the future. In excess of €25 million was allocated to the scheme to facilitate payments to fishermen, with a further €5 million provided for community development projects. It is considered that river stocks in Ireland would be in a far more perilous state if the closure of mixed stock fisheries had not been implemented.

Harvest fisheries are now only allowed on individual river stocks which are shown to have a surplus of fish over the conservation limit. Fisheries in estuaries may also be permitted where the stocks from individual rivers entering the estuaries are each meeting their individual conservation limits. One hundred and five licences are available for salmon fishing this year in respect of the commercial salmon season which opens on 12 May.
During migration from rivers to marine feeding grounds, salmon from both rivers in Ireland and rivers in other countries travel through Ireland’s coastal waters. These “mixed stocks” pose particular difficulties for management as they contain individual fish often from a wide range of rivers internationally some of which are below sustainable reproductive capacity. Any deviation from current policy would be contrary to the international independent scientific advice and would lead to indiscriminate exploitation as the “home river” of off-shore salmon cannot be identified and it is not possible to disaggregate the individuals or stock groups at sea.

Such a move could potentially lead to conflict with EU and international obligations on grounds of not protecting vulnerable Irish and international salmon stocks. The conservation imperative demands that current salmon stocks are not further eroded by mismanagement or inappropriate exploitation, whether via angling, commercial fisheries in rivers inland or through the operation of mixed stock fisheries at sea or in estuaries.

Ireland is committed to international agreements entered into at EU level and at NASCO and the prohibition of mixed stock fisheries is a key element of international best practice in salmon conservation and management.

Waste Disposal Charges

339. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment further to Parliamentary Questions Nos. 422 and 430 of 5 December 2017, the position regarding the proposed roll out of a scheme to assist households with paying for large amounts of waste due to medical conditions. [18875/18]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten):** In line with the commitments set out in *A Resource Opportunity - Waste Management Policy in Ireland*, published in 2012, and in the interest of encouraging further waste prevention and greater recycling, flat-rate fees for kerbside household waste collection are being phased out over the period autumn 2017 to autumn 2018, as customers contracts come up for renewal. The necessary regulatory steps have been put in place to give effect to this measure. It is worth noting that this measure is not ‘new’ for about half of kerbside household waste customers, who are already on an incentivised usage pricing plan, i.e., a plan which contains a per lift or a weight related fee.

As announced in mid-2017, mandatory per kilogramme ‘pay by weight’ charging is not being introduced. Allowing for a range of charging options, which encourage householders to reduce and separate their waste, provides flexibility to waste collectors to develop various service-price offerings that suit different household circumstances.

An annual support of €75 per person is being made available for persons with lifelong or long-term medical incontinence. This will help people meet the average annual cost for the disposal of medical incontinence products. My Department is currently in discussion with the Department of Health and the Health Service Executive to finalise the administrative details and arrangements of the support. I can assure the Deputy that I am committed to finalising the details for this support as a matter of urgency.

Inland Fisheries Ireland Funding

340. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if funding will be provided to Inland Fisheries Ireland to enable it to carry out
a research programme at a location (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19041/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Seán Kyne): I am advised by Inland Fisheries Ireland that it is likely that any investigation of the status of sea trout in the Currane catchment will have three elements: census data, and freshwater and marine sampling programmes to measure performance of different life stages of Sea Trout and to determine the environmental and ecological status of the freshwater and marine habitats. IFI have worked with the Waterville Lakes and Rivers Trust and have examined the options for such a programme. Indications are that, given the extent of the programme, the estimate cost would be of the order of €500,000 over the lifetime of the programme.

Funding is not currently available within IFI’s voted allocation for 2018. However, IFI have advised that they will consider what, if any, alternative funding sources may be available.

Fishing Licences

341. Deputy Michael Healy-Rae asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if salmon fishing licences will be introduced for persons living on islands (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18551/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Seán Kyne): The Atlantic salmon is a protected species under the EU Habitats Directive with which Ireland’s current salmon management regime complies. In order to align fully with the Directive and the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation (NASCO) principles and in view of a sharp decline in salmon stocks, the Irish Government closed mixed stock fisheries in 2007 including coastal and offshore fishing for salmon. Ireland manages salmon stocks on an individual river basis. This management is carried out by Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI), the State Agency with statutory responsibility for inland fisheries. This is based on the fact that each of Ireland’s 147 salmon rivers, river sections, estuaries etc. has its own genetically unique stock of salmon which migrates to sea as juveniles and returns to the same river in adulthood to spawn and create the next generation of fish exclusive to that river.

Management of salmon stocks is informed by scientific advice from the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) and Ireland’s Standing Scientific Committee. Research in coastal areas and in the marine environment concentrates on increasing knowledge of migratory patterns, marine based mortality and return rates to home rivers as stock assessments can only be carried out on the individual stock in each river.

Harvest fisheries are now only allowed on individual river stocks which are shown to have a surplus of fish over the conservation limit. Fisheries in estuaries may also be permitted where the stocks from individual rivers entering the estuaries are each meeting their individual conservation limits.

During migration from rivers to marine feeding grounds, salmon from both rivers in Ireland and rivers in other countries travel through Ireland’s coastal waters including waters around offshore islands. These “mixed stocks” pose particular difficulties for management as they contain individual fish often from a wide range of rivers internationally, some of which are below sustainable reproductive capacity. Any deviation from current policy would be contrary to the international independent scientific advice as the “home river” of off-shore salmon cannot be identified and it is not possible to disaggregate the individuals or stock groups at sea.
Such a move could potentially lead to conflict with EU and international obligations on grounds of not protecting vulnerable Irish and international salmon stocks and the possibility of action against Ireland by the EU. The conservation imperative demands that current salmon stocks are not further eroded by mismanagement or inappropriate exploitation, whether via angling, commercial fisheries in rivers inland or through the operation of mixed stock fisheries at sea or in estuaries.

Ireland is committed to international agreements entered into at EU level and at NASCO and the prohibition of mixed stock fisheries is a key element of international best practice in salmon conservation and management. It is considered that river stocks in Ireland would be in a far more perilous state if the closure of mixed stock fisheries had not been implemented.

The Deputy will be aware that there was a Private Members Bill before the House on 1 February last on the issue of fishing licences for island fishermen. It was confirmed in the debate that salmon are not included in the scope of the proposed Bill.

**Greenhouse Gas Emissions**

342. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he will address a matter (details supplied) regarding devices; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18557/18]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten):** I understand that the two products referred to by the Deputy are over-the-counter products, which can be added to fuel and lubrication fluid respectively. I also understand that similar products are already available in the State. The regulation of such products does not fall under my remit. However, I would direct the Deputy to the National Standards Authority of Ireland, in the first instance, for assistance in this regard.

**Waste Management**

343. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if a similar system to the television licence system can be put in place to identify households that are not contracted to a refuse company for bin collections and verify the way in which their rubbish is being disposed of in order to assist in tackling the spate of dumping across many rural areas; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18564/18]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten):** Each local authority is responsible for the supervision and the enforcement of the relevant provisions of the Waste Management Act 1996 in relation to the holding, recovery and disposal of waste within its functional area. Local authorities have specific powers under the Act to require measures to be taken, or to take measures directly, to prevent or limit environmental pollution caused or likely to be caused by the holding, recovery or disposal of waste, and to mitigate or remedy the effects on the environment of such activity. My role, as Minister, is to provide the legislative and policy framework under which both local authority and Environmental Protection Agency enforcement action is initiated. Enforcement action against illegal waste activity is a matter for the local authorities and the Office of Environmental Enforcement of the EPA as appropriate.

Underpinning waste enforcement is state funding for waste enforcement officers. I have made €9 million available from the Environment Fund this year to support the Waste Enforce-
ment Regional Lead Authorities and the recruitment and continued employment of a network of local authority waste enforcement officers. This investment is critical in providing an enhanced response on the ground to other infractions of the waste code.

Funding has been provided under the 2018 Anti-Dumping Initiative to support a pilot project undertaken by Sligo County Council aimed at tackling and addressing the source of illegal dumping. The aim of this project is to create and maintain a register of how households are managing their waste based on information provided by Waste Collectors. It is anticipated that this approach will facilitate the process of trying to deal with illegal dumping, burning of waste and unauthorised waste management and may form a model of best practice for other Local Authorities to adopt, which in turn will work towards curbing illegal dumping activity nationally.

The Regional Waste Management Planning Offices are also currently preparing a template to help standardise bye-laws on the presentation of waste. The draft template bye-laws aim to place the onus of proof on the householder to prove that they are managing their waste correctly by signing up to a waste collection service or providing receipts for the deposit of waste in authorised facilities.

**Broadband Service Provision**

344. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the status of the provision of broadband around the country; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18571/18]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten):** The Government’s National Broadband Plan (NBP) aims to ensure high speed broadband access (minimum 30 megabits per second) to all premises in Ireland, regardless of location. The NBP has been a catalyst in encouraging investment by the telecoms sector. Today, almost 7 out of 10 of the 2.3 million premises in Ireland have access to high speed broadband. Since this Government came into office almost 400,000 additional premises have access to high speed broadband. This will increase to nearly 8 out of 10 premises by the end of this year and by 2020, 9 out of 10 premises will have access to a high speed broadband connection. This is being achieved via a combination of commercial investment and a State led intervention. In April 2017 I published an updated High Speed Broadband Map which is available at [www.broadband.gov.ie](http://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 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 roll-out high speed broadband to 300,000 premises by the end of this year as part of a Commitment Agreement signed with me in April 2017.

The Commitment Agreement signed with eir relates to its plans to provide high speed broadband to 300,000 premises in rural areas on a commercial basis. eir has committed to completing the roll-out by the end of this year. Information on eir’s planned rural deployment is available
A copy of the Commitment Agreement is available on my Department’s website www.dccae.gov.ie.

My Department is in a formal procurement process to select a company who will roll-out a new high speed broadband network in the State intervention area. That procurement process is now in its final stages.

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.

**Departmental Strategies**

345. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if his Department has developed a national e-commerce strategy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18635/18]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten):** My colleague, the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation leads in policy development and implementation to enhance Ireland’s enterprise environment to support the start-up and growth of competitive firms in Ireland and sustainable development for enterprises of all sizes. My Department, through the Trading Online Voucher Scheme, is contributing to this work by assisting small businesses that are not yet trading online, to develop their e-commerce capability, pairing training with financial support of up to €2,500. The scheme which is developed and funded by my Department is delivered throughout Ireland by the Local Enterprise Offices and is contributing to the sustainable development of these enterprises.

The Scheme has been highly effective in achieving its objectives with 4,300 vouchers approved to date and over 10,000 businesses benefitting from training delivered by the Local Enterprise Offices since 2014. Businesses, both urban and rural, who participate grow their sales on average by 21%, increase employment by 35% and 3 out of 5 begin exporting for the first time.

My aim is to help even more businesses to trade online. My Department is currently scoping initiatives to build on the success of the scheme, including the development of a national website infrastructure for online application to the scheme to make it easier for more businesses to apply and for businesses to obtain information when developing their online trading presence businesses.

**Energy Efficiency**

346. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the number of homes that have been upgraded under the warmth and well-being
Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): The Warmth and Well-being scheme is a joint pilot initiative between my Department and the Department of Health and is being delivered under the Government’s Strategy to Combat Energy Poverty and the Healthy Ireland Framework. The main aim of the scheme, which began in 2016, is to demonstrate the positive effects that making homes warmer and more energy efficient can have on the health and well-being of people in energy poverty who are living with chronic respiratory conditions. An independent analysis is being carried out to assess the health and well-being impact the scheme is having. At the conclusion of the scheme and with independent evidence on its effectiveness, the potential for a wider roll-out will be considered. In total to date, 534 homes have received upgrades under the scheme, with an average cost of €15,700 per home. The upgrades have meant a significant improvement in the condition of the home and, anecdotally, in the quality of life of the occupants.

I have allocated €20million in funding to this 3 year pilot. This should allow for the upgrade of the number of homes needed to develop the evidence base on the impact on the health outcomes of participants, and make the business case for a wider roll-out of the scheme.

The Deputy may also be aware that the Better Energy Warmer Homes scheme is available on a nationwide basis to low income households who are at risk of energy poverty. More information on this scheme is available on SEAI’s website at

http://www.seai.ie/Grants/Warmer_Homes_Scheme/About_the_BEWH.html or Freephone: 1800 250 204.

Sustainable Development Goals

347. Deputy Niall Collins asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the status of the voluntary national review of the sustainable development goals which is due in July 2018; if he or his officials have consulted with NGOs, interest groups or stakeholders as part of this review; if so, the NGOs, interest groups and stakeholders consulted; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18938/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): As Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment, I have lead responsibility for promoting and overseeing the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on a whole-of-Government basis, and for the establishment of a robust SDG implementation and reporting framework. Ireland has committed to delivering its first Voluntary National Review (VNR) on the SDGs to the United Nations’ High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development [HLPF] in July of this year. I will be delivering the VNR at the HLPF and my Department is currently finalising the draft VNR, in consultation with the SDG Interdepartmental Working Group, which is comprised of representatives from all Government Departments. My Department has not formally or informally consulted with any stakeholder directly regarding the VNR to date, but intends to announce VNR consultation arrangements this week. The list of stakeholders who participate in that consultation exercise will be made publicly available through my Department’s website.

I launched Ireland’s first Sustainable Development Goals National Implementation Plan 2018 – 2020 (the Plan) on 26 April 2018. My Department prepared this first Plan, again in consultation with the SDG Interdepartmental Working Group. In drafting the Plan, my Department carried out a stakeholder consultation in December 2017. While this consultation exercise
related to the Plan and not the VNR directly, Ireland’s approach to the VNR process is set out in the Plan and this would have informed stakeholders’ responses. The list of stakeholders who provided my Department with feedback through this consultation exercise is set out in the following table.

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<tr>
<th>Stakeholders</th>
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<td>1</td>
<td>National Milk Agency</td>
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<td>Business in the Community Ireland</td>
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<td>Jeanne Moore (in a personal capacity)</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Development Perspectives</td>
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<td>Vincent Carragher, Research Fellow Trinity College</td>
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<td>World Vision Ireland</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Environment Protection Agency</td>
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<td>The Wheel</td>
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<td>David O’Flynn (in a personal capacity)</td>
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<td>SDGHub at Trinity College Dublin</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Social Justice Ireland</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>Kerry County Council</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>National Youth Council of Ireland</td>
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<td>‘Domestic Sector’ of Coalition2030</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>ICMSA</td>
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<td>Galway City Community Network</td>
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<td>Irish Development Education Association</td>
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<td>Steering Committee of Coalition 2030</td>
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<td>UCD Centre for Sustainable Development Studies</td>
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<td>25</td>
<td>All Together in Dignity Ireland</td>
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<td>26</td>
<td>Irish Family Planning Association</td>
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<td>27</td>
<td>European Anti-Poverty Network</td>
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<td>Irish Rural Link</td>
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<td>Road Safety Authority</td>
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In launching the Plan, I highlighted the importance of stakeholder engagement to support the effective implementation of the SDGs, which is why an SDG Stakeholder Forum will be established as a priority action under the Plan. My Department will seek to ensure that the widest practicable range of stakeholders are represented within the forum.

**Inland Fisheries**

348. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if in addition to seeking funding from the Exchequer for financial supports for former eel fishermen who have been affected by the ban on eel fishing, he will also seek Exche-
quer funding for eel fishery owners who continue to pay annual rates even though eel fishing has been banned; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18972/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Seán Kyne):** I am advised by Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) that in order to commercially fish for eel it was a requirement for any person, including fishery owners, to hold a fishing licence. I am also advised that the majority of eel fishery owners were also licensed by IFI to fish for eel and, therefore, would be included in the proposed support scheme for former fishermen which my officials have advised to the European Commission.

The rateable value of fisheries is set by the Valuation Office on a statutory basis. It is a matter, in the first instance, for fishery owners to contact the Valuations Office as regards the possibility of amending the valuation in the light of current circumstances.

IFI advise that many eel fishery owners have not paid rates since the closure of fisheries in 2009 based on the European Commission’s approval of Ireland’s Eel Management Plan under EU regulation 1100/2007.

Inland Fisheries Ireland is statutorily obliged to collect rates based on rateable valuation established by the Valuations Office, however, it has no statutory function in relation to that issue nor any power to amend rateable valuations.

**National Broadband Plan Implementation**

349. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the timeframe for the roll-out of at least 30mb broadband speeds to a location (details supplied) in County Donegal as part of the national broadband plan; if such areas with poor or no broadband coverage will be prioritised during the roll-out phase as part of the scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18975/18]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten):** The Government’s National Broadband Plan (NBP) aims to ensure high speed broadband access (minimum 30 megabits per second) to all premises in Ireland, regardless of location. The NBP has been a catalyst in encouraging investment by the telecoms sector. Today, almost 7 out of 10 of the 2.3 million premises in Ireland have access to high speed broadband. Since this Government came into office almost 400,000 additional premises have access to high speed broadband. This will increase to nearly 8 out of 10 premises by the end of this year and by 2020, 9 out of 10 premises will have access to a high speed broadband connection. This is being achieved via a combination of commercial investment and a State led intervention. In April 2017 I published an updated High Speed Broadband Map which is available at [www.broadband.gov.ie](http://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 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 roll-out
high speed broadband to 300,000 premises by the end of this year as part of a Commitment Agreement signed with me in April 2017.

There are just over 101,000 premises in County Donegal. Nearly 34,000 (33%) fall within the AMBER area and will be covered under the State led Intervention. More than 56,000 (56%) of premises are in a BLUE area and are, or will be, covered by commercial providers, while approximately 11,000 (11%) are LIGHT BLUE and fall to be covered by eir’s planned rural deployment of high speed broadband to 300,000 premises by 2018.

The premises referred to by the Deputy is located in an AMBER area and therefore high speed broadband will be delivered via the State led intervention.

My Department is in a formal procurement process to select a company who will roll-out a new high speed broadband network in the State intervention area. That procurement process is now in its final stages. My Department will engage with the successful company on the most efficient roll-out of the network.

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.

Roads Maintenance Funding

350. Deputy Danny Healy-Rae asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if his attention has been drawn to the fact that funding and works are required to address a flooding problem at a location (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18558/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The improvement and maintenance of regional and local roads is the statutory responsibility of the relevant County or City Council, in accordance with the provisions of Section 13 of the Roads Act 1993. Works on those roads are funded from the Council’s own resources supplemented by State road grants. The initial selection and prioritisation of works to be funded is also a matter for the Council.

All grant funding available to my Department has been allocated for this year, including specific funding for drainage works.

As regards grants for improvement works, these grants were curtailed during the recession and while the current Capital Plan does provide for the gradual build up in funding for the road network it will take some years yet to reach the level required for the adequate maintenance and renewal of the network. For this reason there continues to be limited scope for funding improvement projects under the Specific/Strategic Grant Programmes. Any projects proposed by local authorities for consideration under these Grant Programmes are assessed by the Department on a case-by-case basis with the main focus on larger scale safety improvement and bridge rehabilitation projects. Such projects are subject to appraisal as required in the Public Spending Code and the Department’s Capital Appraisal Framework.
It is a matter for each local authority to assess its priorities and draw up a roadworks programme based on the State grant funding and own resources available to it. I continue to emphasise to local authorities the importance of prioritising expenditure on roads when allocating their own resources.

### Driver Test Waiting Lists

351. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if a driver test for a person (details supplied) will be expedited; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18561/18]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** This is a matter for the Road Safety Authority. I have referred the question to the Authority for direct reply. I would ask the Deputy to contact my office if a response is not received within 10 days.

### Sports Capital Programme Applications

352. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he met with and or had telephone conversations with persons from a college (details supplied) in respect of a sports capital grant application in 2017 and 2018; the topics discussed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18597/18]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** With regard to the 2017 round of the Sports Capital Programme (SCP), I received numerous contacts from applicants and potential applicants in relation to their proposed projects. Many of these contacts were from applicants from within my constituency, including the organisation referred to by the Deputy. I also received numerous countrywide representations from Government and opposition deputies and as a result, met with a large number of applicants in response to their request for information about the SCP process. While many of these applicants received a grant offer, a number of the applicants who were in contact with me were ultimately deemed invalid.

As I have stated previously, I had no role in relation to the assessment of any individual application or appeal. A review of the 2017 SCP has now been published on my Department’s website which contains full information on the assessment and appeal process including how allocation amounts were ultimately decided.

### Sports Capital Programme Applications

353. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he sought legal advice regarding a sports capital grant in respect of a college (details supplied) in 2017 and or 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18598/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin):** While the general terms and conditions of the Sports Capital Programme (SCP) were drawn up in consultation with the Department’s legal advisors in the Chief State Solicitor’s Office, and advice was obtained from the Department’s Legal Adviser in relation to the proposed approach to the appeals process, legal advice was not sought in relation to any one grant application or any one appeal.

A provisional allocation has been made to the organisation in question under the 2017 round
As is the norm for all grants under the SCP, prior to formal allocation stage, all grantees will be required to give a legal guarantee confirming, inter alia, that the facility will be kept in sporting use and will remain available to any relevant sports club involved in the application. Any other legal requirements are checked at this formal allocation stage and liaison with the CSSO is undertaken as necessary. No payments are made to any grant under the SCP until all relevant legal requirements are met.

Sports Capital Programme Administration

354. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will publish a report (details supplied) that recommends significant changes to reduce the chances of certain clubs and or schools from receiving funding. [18599/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin):** After every recent round of the Sports Capital Programme (SCP) a review was undertaken by the Sports Capital Programmes Division of my Department with a view to making recommendations on how to improve the process for future calls.

The review of the 2017 SCP was published on my Department’s website on the 18th April and can be viewed at


The 2017 Review highlights many positive aspects of the 2017 round of the programme including the simplified application process, the greater transparency in terms of how allocations were decided and the introduction of an appeals process for invalid applications. Areas requiring improvement are also identified however, in particular the need for greater clarity in the Department’s own guide to making an application. The Review also suggests a number of measures aimed at further prioritising applications from disadvantaged areas and all proposals in this regard will be fully considered prior to the next round of the programme opening for applications.

Separately, a full Value For Money Review of the Sports Capital Programme is underway which is being led by the Department’s Strategic Research and Analysis unit, with oversight from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. Provisional findings from this Value For Money Review are expected later this year. A comprehensive Sports Policy paper is also being finalised and future rounds of the SCP will reflect that policy’s relevant provisions.

Road Traffic Offences Data

355. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of written notifications sent by the Road Safety Authority in 2015 to learner drivers for the offence of driving while unaccompanied informing them of the number of penalty points being added to their learner permit; the number of those notices that confirmed that the fixed charge notices was paid within the time limit; the number of notices that confirmed conviction in court of the offence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18630/18]

356. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of written notifications sent by the Road Safety Authority in 2016 to learner drivers for the offence of driving while unaccompanied informing them of the number of penalty points...
being added to their learner permit; the number of those notices that confirmed that the fixed charge notices was paid within the time limit; the number of notices that confirmed conviction in court of the offence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18631/18]

357. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of written notifications sent by the Road Safety Authority in 2017 to learner drivers for the offence of driving while unaccompanied informing them of the number of penalty points being added to their learner permit; the number of those notices that confirmed that the fixed charge notices was paid within the time limit; the number of notices that confirmed conviction in court of the offence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18632/18]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 355 to 357, inclusive, together.

These statistics are within the remit of the Road Safety Authority, and I have forwarded this Parliamentary Question to them for direct reply. Please contact my office if a reply has not been received within 10 working days.

**Sports Capital Programme Applications**

358. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of applications for sports capital funding in 2018; and when the scheme will open for applications. [18653/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin):** The 2017 round of the Sports Capital Programme attracted a record 2,320 applications. In November and December last, Minister Ross and I announced €60m in allocations to a record 1,800 projects under the 2017 round. A review of the 2017 round of the programme has now been finalised and published on my Department’s website (www.dttas.ie). This review highlights aspects of the 2017 round of the SCP that worked well but also suggests some further improvements which should be considered prior to the next round of the programme opening for applications. Work has now commenced on designing the terms and conditions of the new round and an announcement in relation to the timing of it is expected in the coming weeks.

**Rail Network Expansion**

359. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the position regarding funding from the TEN-T programme for the Dunboyne to Navan rail line. [18722/18]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The Navan Rail Link Project, currently part of the TEN-T comprehensive network, was originally included under the Transport 21 Initiative and was to be developed in two Phases. Phase 1, which comprised the Dunboyne Rail Line project and involved the reopening of 7.5km of a railway line running off the Maynooth line, at Clonsilla, to the M3 interchange at Pace near Dunboyne, was opened in September 2010 with Park and Ride facilities for 1200 at Pace and for 300 at Dunboyne. Exchequer funding of €160 million was approved for Phase 1. No TEN-T funding was received for the Navan Rail Link Project.

The plan for Phase 2 involved the extension of the Dunboyne Line between Clonsilla and
M3 Parkway Station, onwards to north Navan. This development together with a number of other transport projects was postponed in 2011 due to the economic and fiscal crisis.

The Government’s recently published National Development Plan confirms a number of key investment priorities including not only protecting investments already made but also considerable investment in public transport modes including Bus, Rail, Luas, Metro, Cycling and Walking, next generation ticketing systems, customer information systems, transition to low emission fleets all to deliver a much expanded comprehensive public transport network that would match travel demand, alleviate congestion and deliver a range of benefits over the next decade.

The NDP also recognises that over the period of the plan it will be very important to examine the role the interurban rail network can play in enhancing regional connectivity. In this regard the NDP notes that the NTA is required to review its Greater Dublin Area Transport Strategy before the end of 2021. This review will include a reappraisal of the extension of the Dunboyne/M3 Parkway line to Dunshauglin and Navan taking into account the scale of new and planned development along the route and will allow for its consideration during the NDP Mid Term Review.

Also looking ahead, the European Commission, in reviewing the implementation of the TEN-T core network by end 2023 and in consultation with Member States, will evaluate whether the core network should be modified to take into account developments in transport flows and national investment planning.

Traffic Management

360. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when his review of transport and traffic challenges in Dublin city will be published. [18764/18]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** As the Deputy is aware the Dublin City Centre Transport Study, published jointly by Dublin City Council and the National Transport Authority (NTA) in 2015 recognised that a rebalancing of the available road space would be required on various streets to facilitate the introduction of additional capacity for public transport, cycling and walking. Through a multi-agency approach by NTA, DCC, and TII working in conjunction with the various Public Transport Operators, the measures set out in the 2015 Study (including the College Green Plaza proposal, developed by Dublin City Council, and currently being considered by An Bord Pleanála) are being progressed so as to ensure that Dublin City transport system is capable of operating efficiently and reliably, with consistent journey times, and that it is facilitating the City’s continued development and growth.

The NTA’s “Transport Strategy for the GDA 2016-2035” provides the overarching framework for the planning and delivery of transport infrastructure and services in the GDA over the next two decades. The measures proposed in the strategy are linked to an analysis of current and projected levels of travel demand across the region and also will be subject to a number of influencing factors including funding availability.

On the issue of funding availability, Budget 2018 provides for an increase in the multi-annual capital investment for public transport with a four-year capital envelope of €2.7 billion over the period 2018-2021. The National Development Plan (NDP), which was launched earlier this year by Government as part of Project Ireland 2040, confirms a number of key investment priorities. These will be delivered progressively and steadily over the short, medium and long term, to deliver a comprehensive public transport network to match transport demand, alleviate
congestion and deliver a range of benefits over the next decade.

In line with legislation, the NTA Strategy will be supported and given effect through a series of sequential shorter-term implementation plans that will set out the investment priorities and proposals over a six year period. Now that the National Development Plan and the National Planning Framework are published, the NTA are in a position to finalise a draft Integrated Implementation Plan for the next 6 year period. I understand that a consultation process on the proposed draft Plan will be commenced later this year after which the Draft Plan will be submitted for my approval.

Road Projects Status

361. **Deputy Kevin O’Keefe** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the details of the M20 Cork to Limerick motorway project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18819/18]

   **Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme. The planning, design and implementation of individual road projects is a matter for Transport Infrastructure Ireland under the Roads Acts 1993-2015 in conjunction with the local authorities concerned.

   Noting the above position, I have referred the Deputy’s question to TII for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you don’t receive a reply within 10 working days.

Sports Capital Programme Data

362. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the allocation of 2017 sports capital programme funding by county; the allocation by county compared to the distribution on a per capita basis in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18820/18]

363. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of applications received for the 2017 sports capital programme by county; the number of valid and invalid applications respectively, by county in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18821/18]

364. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of 2017 sports capital grants awarded compared to the valid applications by county; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18822/18]

367. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of maximum 2017 sports capital grant awards, that is, €150,000, by county; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18959/18]

369. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of 2017 sports capital grant appeals received by county; the number which were successful; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18961/18]

370. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the amount sought by applicants under the 2017 sports capital programme in comparison to the amount that has been allocated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18962/18]
Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin): I propose to take Questions Nos. 362 to 364, inclusive, 367, 369 and 370 together.

All of the information sought by the Deputy in relation to the 2017 Sports Capital Programme is published on my Department’s website at http://www.dttas.ie/sport/english/sports-capital-programme

In relation to this published data, the following should be noted:

1. Under the 2017 SCP, all valid local applications received a grant offer.

2. The 35 allocations made on foot of appeals (which included 5 allocations that were increased as a result of appeals) were calculated on the same basis as the original allocations but these were not allocated to counties on a per capita basis.

3. A fund of €4m was set aside for national and regional projects. Given the nature and distribution of these projects, this funding could not be distributed to counties on a per capita basis (some counties had no national/regional applications).

4. Under the 2017 round of the SCP, the maximum possible grant for a local project was €150,000 and for a national/regional project, the maximum possible grant was €200,000.

Tourism Promotion

365. Deputy John Deasy asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of proposals to create a coastal touring route along the south eastern seaboard; if a decision has been made by Fáilte Ireland on the naming or branding of this proposition; and if the process will be open to submissions from interested parties in due course. [18831/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I am very supportive of efforts to develop this route and I have referred the Deputy’s question to Fáilte Ireland and asked them to provide him with further information and reply directly to him.

Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within ten working days.

Driver Test Centres

366. Deputy Noel Grealish asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when a reversing compound will be provided for the RSA to carry out truck driver tests in County Galway in view of the fact that truck driver tests are now being cancelled in Galway city due to a lack of facilities; the timeframe for the resolution of this issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18876/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): This is a matter for the Road Safety Authority. I have referred the question to the Authority for direct reply, I would ask the Deputy to contact my office if a response is not received within 10 days.

Question No. 367 answered with Question No. 362.

Sports Capital Programme Applications
368. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the appeals mechanism which was available for unsuccessful applications for the 2017 sports capital grant; the way in which unsuccessful applicants were informed of the appeal process; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18960/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin):** On 6 December, 2017 organisations that submitted an invalid or partially invalid local application under the 2017 round of the Sports Capital Programme (SCP) were contacted by email offering them the opportunity to submit an appeal. This email invited clubs to appeal if they believed that the Department had made an error in deeming their application invalid, based on the documentation submitted by the deadline of 24 February 2017. No new documentation was accepted as a basis for appeal. The deadline for appeals against decisions made on local applications was 20 December, 2017. These organisations had previously been informed of the fact that their application was invalid or partially invalid and the reasons for same on 29 and 30 November 2017, respectively.

In the case of invalid non-local applications, a single email informed applicants both of the fact that their application was invalid, the reason(s) for same and the fact that an appeals process was available to them. This email was sent on 22 December. On the same day, partially invalid applicants received both an email informing them of a provisional allocation being made to them and the purpose for same as well as a separate email informing them of the appeals process and the fact that they could appeal the decision on the invalid element(s) of their application. The deadline for making an appeal against a decision on a non-local application was 19 January, 2018.


**Sports Capital Programme Applications**

371. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if an applicant was not awarded the full amount sought under the 2017 sports capital programme and their application was deemed to be valid, the mechanism by which a lesser amount was awarded; if the same formula is used for all allocations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18963/18]


All valid local applications received a grant offer determined by the following formula:

- The Maximum Grant for each valid application was multiplied by the Assessment Score for that application producing a weighted score (A).

- The total weighted scores (A’s) for all applications in a county were added together to give a total (T).

- This total figure (T) was divided into the Per Capita County Funding (C) giving a Ratio of total weighted score to the available funding (T to C).
- The Ratio was then multiplied by A for each application to give the draft recommended allocation to each application.

For national and regional applications, the top scoring two thirds of valid applications received a grant offer and the same formula was applied to calculate actual grant amounts. This formula was also used for allocations made on foot of successful appeals.

**Bus Éireann Fleet**

372. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O’Mahony** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of buses in the Bus Éireann fleet in west County Cork that are wheelchair friendly; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18992/18]

**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.

**National Transport Authority**

373. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when the NTA will publish an integrated implementation plan for the greater Dublin area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19052/18]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The NTA’s “Transport Strategy for the GDA 2016-2035” provides the overarching framework for the planning and delivery of transport infrastructure and services in the GDA over the next two decades. The measures proposed in the strategy are linked to an analysis of current and projected levels of travel demand across the region and also will be subject to a number of influencing factors including funding availability.

On the issue of funding availability, Budget 2018 provides for an increase in the multi-annual capital investment for public transport with a four-year capital envelope of €2.7 billion over the period 2018-2021.

The National Development Plan (NDP), which was launched earlier this year by Government as part of Project Ireland 2040, confirms a number of key investment priorities. These will be delivered progressively and steadily over the short, medium and long term, to deliver a comprehensive public transport network to match transport demand, alleviate congestion and deliver a range of benefits over the next decade.

In line with legislation, the NTA Strategy will be supported and given effect through a series of sequential shorter-term implementation plans that will set out the investment priorities and proposals over a six year period. Now that the National Development Plan and the National Planning Framework are published, the NTA are in a position to finalise a draft Integrated Implementation Plan for the next 6 year period. I understand that a consultation process on the proposed draft Plan will be commenced later this year after which the Draft Plan will be submitted for my approval.

**Preschool Services**
374. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs her views on a matter (details supplied) regarding funding; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18633/18]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** Pobal administers many aspects of the Access and Inclusion Model on behalf of the Department. Pobal has advised that no application has yet been made under AIM Level 5 on behalf of the child in question.

The pre-school service should apply for the specific piece of equipment by completing an AIM Level 5 application on the Programmes Implementation Platform (PIP) on the Pobal website. The application should be accompanied by a parental consent form and by a HSE AIM Level 5 template completed by a health professional. The health professional will need to confirm that the proposed equipment is necessary and critical to enable the child to participate in the ECCE programme.

The application process for AIM supports for children entering ECCE for the first time in September 2018 opens on 1st May. It is advisable that applications for AIM supports are made as early as possible to ensure that the relevant supports are in place when required.

AIM is a model of supports designed to ensure that children with a disability can access the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme. The key objective of AIM is to support pre-school providers to deliver an inclusive pre-school experience, ensuring that children with a disability can fully participate in the ECCE programme, thereby reaping the benefits of quality pre-school education.

AIM is a child-centered model, involving seven levels of progressive support, moving from the universal to the targeted, based on the needs of the child and the pre-school setting. AIM Level 5 provides for access to specialised equipment, appliances, assistive technology and/or minor alterations capital grants for early years settings to ensure children with a disability can participate in the ECCE programme. A short report from a designated professional is required confirming that the specialised equipment or minor building alterations are necessary.

**Mother and Baby Homes Inquiries**

375. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if children born in Mother and Baby Homes will be eligible for redress to address the psychological impact of having been separated from their birth mother; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18590/18]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** The question of redress for former residents of Mother and Baby Homes is one which I have addressed on a number of occasions and I am happy to restate the Government’s position for the Deputy.

Mother and Baby Homes have not been central to any previous statutory inquiry so this Commission must be given the opportunity to advance its investigation and to establish the facts of what happened in and around these institutions.

The independent Commission of Investigation has made no findings to date about abuse or neglect in any of the homes within its terms of reference. In these circumstances, it is not possible for Government to put in place a redress scheme in relation to the broad range of matters within the scope of this investigation prior to the Commission submitting its findings and conclusions.
The challenges for Government in considering such matters at an interim stage of a Commission’s work were further highlighted in the Special Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General on the Residential Institutions Redress Scheme.

As I have indicated previously, when the final reports of the Commission are available, the Government will listen and respond to the full account of the Commission’s conclusions on this and all matters regarding the treatment of former residents.

In the interim, the Government has agreed to consider supports to meet the health and well-being needs of former residents. The establishment of a Collaborative Forum is a progressive approach to assist former residents to prioritise areas of concern for them and their families. A public information campaign is to commence this week seeking expressions of interest in being appointed to the Forum.

**Homeless Persons Supports**

376. **Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the supports for children living in emergency accommodation; if further studies on the impact of homelessness have been undertaken; and the way in which she will address the needs of children in long-term homeless accommodation. [18610/18]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** While the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government has ultimate responsibility for managing homelessness, as the Deputy will be aware, I am committed to helping children and families as part of a whole-of-Government response to the problem of homelessness. While no further studies on the impact of homelessness have been carried out by my Department, there can be little doubt that homelessness is an extremely distressing experience, and that any medium to long-term period living in a hotel or other emergency accommodation seriously impacts on normal family life and is particularly detrimental to children.

Where children are homeless as part of a family experiencing homelessness, my Department is working closely with Tusla to provide supports to mitigate the challenges faced by these parents and children. These include the introduction of free childcare for the children of families experiencing homelessness. As part of the scheme a daily meal is provided for each child, the cost of which is included in the subvention rate. The scheme is also designed to help those transitioning from homelessness to permanent accommodation.

Tusla works together with other statutory and voluntary agencies to provide services and supports to children, young people and families experiencing homelessness. Actions taken by Tusla include the provision of funding for child support workers and the appointment of a Homelessness Liaison Officer.

Family Resource Centres, part funded by Tusla, are working with people who are experiencing homelessness and many have developed local responses to the needs of families in emergency accommodation. These include, by way of example, family fun days, homework support, after school programmes, play therapy and transport services. Under its Business Plan for 2018 Tusla has committed to assigning a Tusla team to all currently operational family hubs and to each new hub at the commencement of operations. Tusla has also committed to developing specific targeted initiatives so that children and their families who are homeless can avail of services in a safe, warm, welcoming space where they feel comfortable and respected. These initiatives will be located in FRCs and places which are close to where children and families may access emergency accommodation.
In recognition of the difficulties associated with homelessness and school attendance, Tusla’s Educational Welfare Service offers a number of supports to children (and families) experiencing homelessness.

Tusla’s joint protocol with the Dublin Regional Homeless Executive (DRHE) covers child welfare and protection matters for children in emergency accommodation. It is fully operational in the DRHE areas and it is intended to replicate this protocol across the State. A Joint Working Protocol has been signed between Tusla and Galway City Council.

Finally, the DRHE is coordinating the development of a comprehensive National Quality Standards Framework for homeless services on behalf of all housing authorities. Consultation with service users and key stakeholders, including Tusla, has been undertaken and the draft standards have been piloted in selected services. These standards, including a child safety element which will provide homeless services with a framework for continuous quality improvement, will be implemented nationally.

It is important to note that Tusla only intervenes in family life in exceptional circumstances. Children who are with their families in emergency accommodation remain in the care of their parents or guardians. Where Tusla has concerns regarding the welfare and development of any child they will provide family supports to assist that family and child.

Ultimately, my concern is that we minimise and then eliminate the problem of homelessness. In the meantime, I will continue to support measures to help those affected, to the greatest degree possible within my area of responsibility.

**Homeless Persons Data**

377. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of children or young adults that Tusla is assisting with housing needs; the costs associated with same for each of the past four years; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18654/18]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** As these are operational matters, I have asked Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, to respond directly to the Deputy with the most up-to-date information.

**Child Protection**

378. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she has sought clarification as to whether all family hubs funded by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government have child protection policies in place (details supplied); and if all staff are Garda vetted. [18687/18]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** As the Deputy will be aware, all Private Emergency Accommodation service providers are required to have child protection policies in place. Furthermore, the DRHE requires that, in relation to service providers for emergency accommodation, all owners, managers and staff, contract or otherwise must undergo Garda vetting in advance of commencing employment. The service provider has responsibility for obtaining Garda vetting and the DRHE provide assistance to the service provider in this regard.

I met with Inner City Helping Homeless in March and agreed, on foot of that meeting, to
raise a number of concerns voiced on the day with the Dublin Region Homeless Executive (DRHE). The DRHE replied to my letter of March 14 on March 23. This response has recently been forwarded to Inner City Helping Homeless and I apologise for the delay in so doing.

I understand that in the latter half of 2017, the DRHE developed a guideline document for Private Emergency Accommodation service providers, outlining the requirements that operators must meet as part of their contractual arrangements with the DRHE. In line with this document, the DRHE developed a training programme for all staff employed by private emergency operators which covers areas such as child protection, dealing with challenging behaviour, staff conduct and boundary setting. This programme of training is offered to all providers of private emergency accommodation and continues to be rolled out through 2018.

In relation to the component of training referring to child protection, a full of training takes place covering child protection matters - delivered by an expert in the area of child welfare and protection.

Finally, the DRHE have informed me that they carry out regular inspections, both announced and unannounced, on all service providers. The inspection results are made known to the service providers who are then required to carry out any corrective action necessary.

Mother and Baby Homes Inquiries

379. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the status of the progression of the transitional justice for survivors of Mother and Baby Homes; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18718/18]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** I am committed to working with my colleagues in Government, and in collaboration with former residents, to take appropriate actions to address the issues which have already emerged from the work of the Commission. I believe that this is the best way forward in our response to what are hugely complex and sensitive matters. The principles of transitional justice inform my approach to these measures.

In this regard the Deputy may be aware that I am currently in the process of establishing a Collaborative Forum for former residents. It is a progressive response to the theme of “nothing about us without us” which emerged from the facilitated consultations I held with former residents last year. A number of priority areas have been identified from our consultations to date. The Forum will incorporate three sub-committees that will examine a range of areas, including key transitional justice measures such as memorialisation and the capture of personal narratives. I have appointed an independent Selection Panel to select representative members from those persons who express an interest in participating in this process. An information campaign on how to apply to become a member of the Forum will commence in the coming days.

I believe that open and consistent communication with former residents and other stakeholders on the matters of concern to them is essential while the Commission continues with the work it was established to do. In this regard, my Department has continued to post a an e-zine update on the Mother and Babies Homes section of my Department’s website on the first Friday of every month. In this way we can ensure that everyone has access to the same information at the same time.

I also secured Government approval for an invitation to be extended to the UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence to visit Ireland. I am pleased to confirm that this invitation has issued. The Special Rapporteur will
have many demands on his time but I hope that he may be in a position to provide a favourable response to this invitation. A visit from the UN Special Rapporteur would provide a vital insight into the relationship between international human rights standards and the everyday lives of Ireland’s citizens.

In relation to the site of the former Mother and Baby Home in Tuam, following the publication of the Report of the Expert Technical Group, public consultations were held in March so that all interested parties could have an opportunity to voice their opinions on these sensitive matters. The facilitator’s report is now available to inform the deliberations of the inter-departmental committee coordinating the State’s response to this matter. The committee is meeting tomorrow with a view to making recommendations to me on these sensitive matters. I will then be in a position to bring proposals to Government for a decision on the future of the site.

My Department continues to post a monthly e-zine update on the Mother and Babies Homes section of my Department’s website on the first Friday of every month. In this way everyone has access to the same information at the same time.

**Departmental Communications**

380. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs when a reply will issue to correspondence (details supplied). [18744/18]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** I would like to inform the Deputy that a response was forwarded to the person concerned on Friday 27th April.

**Children and Young People’s Policy Framework**

381. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the funding set aside in each of the past five years for vulnerable and disadvantaged young persons between 16 and 24 years of age in County Sligo that are not in regular education or training; her views on whether there is a particular problem in the north west; her further views on the reasons for same; if her Department or agencies under its remit plan to improve the situation for young persons in County Sligo; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18816/18]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** Children and Young People’s Services Committees (CYPSC) are a key structure identified by Government to plan and co-ordinate services for children and young people in every county in Ireland including County Sligo. The overall purpose is to improve outcomes for children and young people by enhancing interagency co-operation at a local and national level having regard to issues including children and young people not in education or who are not participating in training courses. Through its work in the Sligo area, Sligo CYPSC aims to realise the five national outcomes set out in Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People (2014 – 2020).

My Department administers a range of funding schemes and programmes to support the provision of youth services to young people throughout the country, including those from disadvantaged communities.

The funding provided by my Department to Mayo, Sligo and Leitrim Education and Training Board over the past five years for vulnerable and disadvantaged people in Sligo is provided in the accompanying table. In certain circumstances the distribution of funds between counties
within an ETB area is not available to my Department.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Special Projects for Youth</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sligo/Leitrim Home Youth Liaison Service</td>
<td>€44,812</td>
<td>€44,812</td>
<td>€43,132</td>
<td>€44,210</td>
<td>€46,421</td>
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<td>Youth Information Centre</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sligo YIC</td>
<td>€64,602</td>
<td>€64,602</td>
<td>€62,179</td>
<td>€63,734</td>
<td>€66,921</td>
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<tr>
<td>Young Peoples Facilities and Services Fund 1 &amp; 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3rd Level Facilitator Programme</td>
<td>€7,540</td>
<td>€7,540</td>
<td>€7,257</td>
<td>€7,438</td>
<td>€7,810</td>
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<td>Local Youth Club Grant Scheme</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mayo, Sligo and Leitrim ETB</td>
<td>€17,449 (Sligo)</td>
<td>€17,449 (Sligo)</td>
<td>€17,449 (Sligo)</td>
<td>€58,568</td>
<td>€64,425</td>
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<tr>
<td>Youth Employability Initiative</td>
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<tr>
<td>North Connaught Youth &amp; Community Service</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>€4,971</td>
<td>€4,971</td>
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<tr>
<td>Local Youth Club Equipment Scheme</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mayo Sligo Leitrim ETBLYCES Allocation</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>€420,032</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mayo Sligo Leitrim ETB funding provided to administer the LYCES</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>€16,816</td>
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<tr>
<td>Youth Officer Function</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mayo Sligo Leitrim ETBY- Youth Officer Function payment</td>
<td>€73,280 (Sligo Leitrim)</td>
<td>€71,082 (Sligo Leitrim)</td>
<td>€71,082 (Sligo Leitrim)</td>
<td>€140,199</td>
<td>€115,889</td>
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<tr>
<td>Capital Payment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sligo Leitrim Home Youth Liaison School Project</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>€8,312 (Sligo Leitrim)</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Special Projects for Youth funding is made available in respect of out-of-school projects for disadvantaged young people. Young People Facilities and Services funding was established by the Government in 1998 to assist in the development of preventative strategies in a targeted manner through the development of youth facilities, including sports and recreational facilities. Youth Information Centre funding provides young people with access to information on rights, opportunities, health and other matters. The Local Youth Club Grant Scheme supports youth work activities at a local level. These grants are made available to all youth clubs and groups through their local Education and Training Board.

Youth Officers of the Education and Training Boards have an important support role to my Department in the administration and co-ordination of youth services at a local level. Funding is provided under the Youth Officer function to assist Education and Training Boards with the cost of employing youth officers. Last year the local youth club equipment scheme enabled volunteer led clubs and groups that work with young people to purchase sports, arts, adventure and other much needed items.

My Department recently completed an exercise with Pobal and each Education and Training Board which mapped youth service provision across the State. This mapping exercise will assist my Department and each Education and Training Board in developing a detailed social demographic profile, in terms of both population numbers and deprivation levels, which will inform future developments and investment in youth services. My Department is committed to working with Mayo, Sligo and Leitrim ETB to identify need and explore ways to address this need where it emerges.

Youth Services Funding

382. Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs when a youth service (details supplied) in Dublin 1 will receive formal acknowledgement of its funding application for 2018. [18833/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I can confirm that an application for youth funding for 2018 has been submitted to my Department via the funding intermediary, City of Dublin Youth Service Board (CDYSB) on behalf of this organisation.

The funding allocations for 2018 for all organisations funded to support the provision of youth services throughout the country are currently being finalised within my Department. When these allocations are finalised a letter of allocation will issue to CDYSB advising it of the funding allocation provided to support youth services within its ETB area. This letter of allocation will include the allocated funding for SWAN Youth Services.

Mother and Baby Homes Inquiries

383. Deputy Seamus Healy asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs when the invitation to Mr. Pablo De Greiff, UN Special Rapporteur, was extended to provide international human rights oversight of the Government’s response to issues regarding the Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18834/18]

385. Deputy Denise Mitchell asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if an invitation has been issued to a person (details supplied) to visit Ireland to assist in issues related
Questions - Written Answers

to former Mother and Baby Homes; if so, when he is expected to arrive; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18883/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I propose to take Questions Nos. 383 and 385 together.

Notwithstanding Ireland’s standing invitation to all United Nations thematic special procedures holders, I received Government approval for a specific invitation to be extended to the Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence to visit Ireland in the context of our response to the issue of mother and baby homes and related matters.

The Deputy may be aware that Mr. Fabian Salvioli has recently replaced Mr. Pablo de Grieff in that position, and the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade issued a formal invitation on behalf of the Irish Government to Mr. Fabian Salvioli on the 18 April. I understand that the Special Rapporteur will have many demands on his time but I hope that he may be in a position to provide a favourable response to this invitation.

The Government believes that the expertise and experience of Mr. Fabian Salvioli can provide valuable assistance in our response to the issues relating to mother and baby homes. A visit from the UN Special Rapporteur could also provide vital insight into the relationship between international human rights standards and the everyday lives of Ireland’s citizens.

Separately, the Deputy may also wish to note that I will be meeting with the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Sale and Sexual Exploitation of Children in the course of her upcoming visit to Ireland from 14th to 21st of May.

I have a keen interest and focus on the mandate of the Rapporteur which covers a broad scope of children’s issues. These include the sexual exploitation of children online; sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism; child prostitution, child pornography and child trafficking for sale and sexual exploitation; and sale of children for the purpose of illegal adoption, transfer of organs, child marriage and forced labour.

I understand that the Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes has also agreed to meet with the Special Rapporteur while she is here.

Mother and Baby Homes Inquiries

384. Depute Denise Mitchell asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of survivors that have given evidence to the Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes to date; the number in this regard that were referred to counselling services; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18881/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): With regard to the statutory Commission of Investigation (Mother and Baby Homes and certain related Matters), it is firstly important to recognise that the Commission is independent in the conduct of its investigations.

I am conscious that revisiting difficult personal experiences when giving testimony to a Commission would be distressing for those involved. I know that some people may need to access various supports around this time and I have previously advised any persons so affected to consider contacting the Health Service Executive National Counselling Service.
With regard to the Commission of Investigation, it is important to recognise that the statutory Commission is independent in the conduct of its investigations. Therefore, the individual arrangements with witnesses are a matter for the Commission and I have no role in this regard.

I am aware that the Commission does ask former residents attending as witnesses if they have access to supports and whether they would like information on available services. I understand that, if they so wish, this information is provided by the Commission but it does not make referrals to these services.

In relation to the number of former residents who have given evidence to the Commission, I do not have this information for the reasons outlined above. However, the Commission’s Third Interim Report, which I have published, states that as of September 2017, the confidential committee had met with 346 former residents or others with connections to the institutions under investigation, and expected to engage with a further 200 persons who had applied to meet the committee.

*Question No. 385 answered with Question No. 383.*

*Question No. 386 answered with Question No. 52.*

**Departmental Correspondence**

387. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the average wait time in responding to a request for a review of an investigation; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19002/18]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** I am unclear as to what specific information is being sought by the Deputy in his question. In the circumstances, perhaps it is best that my officials will contact the Deputy for clarification and I can follow up with him accordingly.

**Child and Family Agency**

388. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if a request (details supplied) was made to Tusla; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19003/18]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** As the Deputy’s question refers to an operational matter for Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, I have requested Tusla to respond directly to the Deputy.

**Youth Services Funding**

389. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she will address a matter regarding funding for a club (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19047/18]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** My Department provides funding to Kerry Diocesan Youth Service for youth services under the Special Projects for Youth scheme which supports projects which target young people who are disadvantaged
including young Travellers and young people who are out of school and at risk of drugs, substance abuse or homelessness. Funding is also provided for a youth information centre operating in Tralee and Killarney.

In 2017, funding of €539,398 was allocated to Kerry Diocesan Youth Service for these youth services, an increase of €35,000 over the previous year. My Department is at an advanced stage in advising projects and services, including those in Kerry of their 2018 allocations.

There has been no reduction in funding to this organisation this year, and my Department has not been advised of any funding difficulties being experienced by the project in Killarney.

Officials within my Department have commenced a process of engagement with the funding intermediaries, Kerry ETB and City of Dublin Youth Service Board with a view to ensuring that the needs of young people in Killarney are being met.

Children in Care

390. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the steps she plans to take to ensure children’s safety is paramount while they are in foster care; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19058/18]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** Under the Child Care Act, 1991, as amended, and the Child and Family Agency Act 2013, Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, has a statutory duty to promote the welfare of children who are not receiving adequate care and protection. Where appropriate, children who are in need of care and protection are received into the care of the State under the Child Care Act, 1991, as amended.

Regulations govern the placement of children in care. These provide for the welfare of the child, the care practices, care records, accommodation and safety precautions. The Regulations also provide that the allocated social worker oversees the implementation of the child’s care plan, visits the child and consults with family members, foster carers and other people involved with the child to ensure that his or her needs are being met and that the care being provided is optimal.

Children, depending on their identified need, may be placed in foster care either with relatives or general foster carers, in residential care, special care or other placement types. The majority of children in care in Ireland are in foster care. Matching carers with children and young people is outlined in the National Standards for Foster Care (2003), and the National Standards for Children’s Residential Centres (2001) outlines the need for suitable placements in residential care.

It is vital that all children in care, and their carers, receive adequate support to ensure a successful placement. Foster care is the main form of alternative care for children in need of care and protection, and is the preferred option for children who cannot live with their parents or guardians. At the end of December 2017, there were 6,189 children in care in Ireland. 92% (5,702) of these were cared for in foster placements. The majority of children are in the care of general foster carers.

Key elements of the support to be provided to children in care include: access to a link social worker for supervision and support to the foster carers; allocation of a dedicated social worker for children in care; onward referral and advocacy for access to specialist services to meet the child’s identified needs, such as speech and language therapy, counselling and psychology services.
The link worker is a professionally qualified social worker and meets regularly with foster carers to supervise the capacity of the foster carers to adequately meet the needs of the child and to provide training, information and whatever other support that may be required. At the end of December 2017, 81% (3554/4384) of foster carers had a link social worker and 95% (5415/5702) of children in foster care had an allocated social worker.

Tusla provides funding to the Irish Foster Care Association which provides supports to carers, including training and a phone advice service.

My Department receives regular detailed reports on key performance and activity indicators of service provision, including on children in care, from Tusla, the Child and Family Agency. My officials have regular meetings on a monthly and quarterly basis with Tusla management to review the overall level of service provision, including areas in need of improvement. In addition to regular reports, Tusla also provides occasional or special topic reports, as required, which can then be used for budget and resource planning.

In addition to the reporting arrangements with Tusla my Department also reviews the findings of a number of independent bodies, which are made available in the inspection reports from the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) who inspect all statutory children’s residential centres and special care units run by the State, as well as Fostering Services and Child Protection and Welfare Services in each area. Services are required to develop an Action Plan in response to any recommendations made by Inspectors. HIQA undertakes follow-up inspections to examine the progress being made against Action Plans. All of these Reports are published on HIQA’s website www.hiqa.ie. All 17 areas have been inspected at least once by HIQA, as well as a number of private foster care services.

Registration and inspection of non-statutory run Residential Centres is carried out by Inspection and Monitoring Officers employed by Tusla, the Child and Family Agency. My Department also receives reports on child deaths and serious incidents from the independently chaired National Review Panel, and reports from the Ombudsman for Children.

Child Care Services Funding

391. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs her plans to increase substantially the maximum level of grant aid in respect of the provision of new childcare facilities in cases in which there is an identified need for additional places and in which the maximum level of grant aid under the present scheme would be inadequate to support a community childcare organisation to provide accommodation; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19068/18]

392. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs her plans to introduce a new childcare capital grant scheme in 2018 to assist community childcare operators to extend or provide new childcare facilities in cases in which there is an identified need for additional places; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19069/18]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 391 and 392 together.

Assisting childcare providers in extending their existing childcare services, or establishing new childcare services, have always been key areas of focus for my Department’s capital programmes.

The 2018 Early Years and School Age Childcare Capital programmes provide two strands
of funding for the set-up or expansion of childcare facilities, with the aim of creating additional new childcare places (Strand 1 Early Years and Strand 4 School Age, details provided in the attached applicant guidelines). The application window for the Early Years and School Age Childcare Capital programmes closed on 14th March 2018, with appraisals now under way. Approximately 2,000 individual applications were received, including over 560 applications for funding across Strand 1 and Strand 4. Decisions on capital grants will be delivered to providers in late May 2018. Both of the strands mentioned above are open to all providers, community and private, who wish to create new childcare places. In addition to this, there are two strands of funding dedicated to community childcare services only (Early Years Strand 2 and School Age Strand 5) to provide grant funding to contribute towards essential maintenance and repair of facilities. The final strand of funding (Early Years Strand 3) provides for the creation of a new natural outdoor play area, and is open to all early years providers, both community and private. I am happy to have secured €250m in capital funding for childcare under the National Development Plan (NDP, 2018-2027), as part of which childcare has been confirmed as a strategic priority for capital investment. Officials in my Department are currently undertaking research to determine capital need both current and future, with a view to focusing state capital investment in the sector. The preliminary results of this research are due later this year, and will inform any capital plans or programmes administered by my Department from there on. The shape and focus of capital investment under the National Development Plan are as such yet to be determined. Furthermore, I would like to assure you that the structure and priorities of 2019’s Capital programmes are under review by officials in my Department, and these will be shared with childcare providers and the general public as soon as they are confirmed in late 2018. As part of this, the scale of individual grant amounts available is being reviewed along with all other aspects of Early Years and School Age capital funding.

I remain committed to assisting all childcare providers, both community and private, in providing world-class childcare and meeting demand for childcare places, and I anticipate that next year’s Capital programme will build on this year’s good work in the sector, as well as that of previous years.

Child Protection

393. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the extent to which she continues to improve the services available for the protection of children in the home, in foster care or in statutory residential care; if sufficient resources continue to be available to meet all likely future requirements; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19128/18]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** I am committed to supporting the Child and Family Agency in meeting the growing needs of children and families. I was pleased to secure an additional €40.6 million for Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, in 2018. This is the third year in succession that Tusla has received a significant increase in its funding, which now amounts to over €753m.

The extra resources secured for Tusla in 2018 will assist in meeting key priorities. The additional investment will allow Tusla to recruit a range of additional staff to respond to areas of identified risk, and to meet increased demand for services, including an anticipated increase in referrals following the introduction of mandatory reporting.

As the Deputy will be aware, in December 2017, I commenced all remaining provisions of the Children First Act 2015 in fulfilment of a key Programme for Government commitment to put elements of the Child Protection Guidance on a statutory footing.
The aim of the Act is to improve the care and protection of children by raising awareness of child abuse and neglect. It will help to ensure that child protection concerns, in whichever setting they arise, are brought to the attention of Tusla without delay. The Act is an important addition to the child welfare and protection measures already in place, and it forms part of a suite of child protection legislation including the Criminal Justice (Withholding of Information on Offences against Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012 and the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012.

The framework surrounding the placement of children in the care of the State in foster care (including foster care with relatives) and residential care is governed by the Child Care Act 1991 and associated Regulations, relevant standards and, in the case of private service providers, contractual obligations. This framework to secure the best interests of the child in State care is monitored by Tusla and inspected against by HIQA (in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Health Act 2007).

**Youth Services Funding**

394. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the extent to which her Department can provide for adequate funding for youth services and youth development services across the country with particular reference to areas of social and economic deprivation; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19129/18]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** I am pleased to confirm that an extra €1.5m has been allocated in current funding to support the provision of youth services in 2018. This will bring the total current youth funding available to my Department to €58.9m. The additional funding is being used for programmes that target disadvantaged young people.

My Department administers a range of funding schemes and programmes to support the provision of youth services to young people throughout the country including those from disadvantaged communities. The funding schemes support national and local youth work involving approximately 1,400 youth work staff working in youth services and communities throughout the country.

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

Last year each of the sixteen Education and Training Boards (ETB), was invited to nominate locations within their catchment areas for the establishment of new services and to nominate a project or service to be considered for augmentation. In total twenty-eight applications for new services were received. Subsequently I approved the establishment of nine new targeted youth services across the country and the expansion of a further seven to respond to new demand from increased population and needs of young people.

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

Child Abuse

395. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the average time taken to investigate cases of children at risk of the various forms of abuse; the degree to which a systemic response is in place to deal with such issues; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19130/18]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** I have written to Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, to request the information outlined by the Deputy. A further response will issue when the information has been supplied.

Tusla publishes figures on a quarterly basis to indicate the length of time a case is awaiting allocation, by priority level. At the end of Q3 2017, the most recent validated data published, 63% of high priority cases were waiting less than 3 months, compared to 53% of medium priority cases and 43% of low priority cases.

Child Protection

396. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the extent to which support services can be made available to children who may be at risk as result of being undocumented non-nationals; the extent to which particular measures are taken to protect such children; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19131/18]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** The Child Care Act, 1991 applies to all children resident in the State irrespective of their immigration status. Under the Child Care Act, 1991 and the Child and Family Agency Act 2013, Tusla has a duty to promote the welfare of children who are not receiving adequate care or protection. The Agency is obliged to provide care for these children for as long as their welfare requires it.

Children First National Guidance (2011) gives advice for notifying Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, of situations where abuse is suspected. A range of professionals including teachers, nurses, early years educators, Gardaí and other health professionals, who see children regularly, are in a good position to identify children at risk. Where someone has reasonable grounds for suspecting a child is being, or has been, abused, they are expected to immediately contact Tusla.

The Children First Act, 2015 places a statutory obligation on key professionals, such as those named above (mandated persons) to report concerns of harm above a defined threshold to Tusla without delay. These provisions commenced on December 11th, 2017.

When a child who is undocumented, and is living with his or her parent or guardian, is taken into care, their needs are given priority. A social worker is assigned to the child and prepares a care plan, in consultation with the child. The plan should be dynamic and formally reviewed regularly. Intrinsic to this process is ensuring that the voice and best interest of the child are central. When outlined in the care plan, Tusla will assist the child with the process of establishing residency.

Unaccompanied asylum seeking children who seek the assistance of the State are placed in the statutory care of Tusla. Their needs are assessed by an allocated a social worker from a specialist team who work exclusively with unaccompanied minors. They receive appropriate educational, social, medical counselling support.

Children who, with their parents, live in Direct Provision, are provided with welfare sup-
ports as required. Tusla have seconded an experienced social worker to the Department of Justice and Equality to liaise directly between Direct Provision and Tusla services.

Aftercare Services Provision

397. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the back-up facilities available on an ongoing basis for children and young adults on leaving institutional care; her plans to improve this service; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19132/18]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** As the Deputy is aware, the responsibility of my Department for children and young adults leaving institutional care relates specifically to those who are or have been in the care of the State. As the Deputy will also know, the aftercare provisions of the Child Care (Amendment) Act 2015 came into force on the first of September last. This means that there is now a statutory obligation on Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, to prepare an aftercare plan for each eligible child and young person. This plan encompasses the range of supports that a young person may need from all service providers, including Tusla, to help them make the transition to independent adult life. This might include identifying suitable accommodation, which for many young people may mean remaining with their former foster carer.

A minority of young people leaving care are at a more pronounced risk of entering unstable accommodation due to the complexity of their support needs. Funding is now available to Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs) under the Capital Assistance Scheme (CAS) to provide accommodation to these particularly vulnerable young people. The security provided by a tenancy in CAS accommodation combined with the aftercare supports identified by Tusla as part of the aftercare planning process should ensure that these young people have a safe base from which to begin their independent life.

I am pleased to inform the Deputy that I have secured an additional €40 million for Tusla in 2018. This is the third year in succession that Tusla has received a significant increase in its funding, which now amounts to over €753m. The additional resources secured for Tusla in 2018 will assist in meeting key priorities. The additional investment will allow Tusla to recruit a range of additional staff to respond to areas of identified risk, and to meet increased demand for services, including aftercare supports.

Child Protection

398. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the degree to which her Department continues to support voluntary bodies involved in the provision of care or support to children at risk; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19133/18]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, provides financial support to a large number of organisations involved in the provision of services to children at risk. Grants are issued to service providers that work in conjunction with Tusla, as well as to local school completion projects and to voluntary organisations.

The total expenditure in the form of grants paid by Tusla came to some €151.7m last year. Tusla will continue to support voluntary bodies that carry out this important work in 2018.
and into the future.

**Youth Services Funding**

399. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs to outline the extent to which her Department continues to support an organisation (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19134/18]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** My Department administers a range of funding schemes and programmes to support the provision of youth services to young people throughout the country, including those from disadvantaged communities. The funding schemes support national and local youth work involving approximately 1,400 youth work staff working in youth services and communities throughout the country.

In 2017, an amount totalling €525,425 was allocated for the projects and services under Kildare Youth Services, which operates under Youth Work Ireland. My Department provides funding to Kildare Youth Services under the Special Projects for Youth Scheme in respect of six local youth projects in Athy, Naas, Leixlip, Newbridge, the Curragh and Kildare town and a Youth Information Centre in Naas.

In addition, last year, I announced the Local Youth Club Equipment Scheme, the first scheme of its type in over a decade. Some €6.35 million was made available nationally in 2017 to volunteer led clubs and groups that work with young people in communities throughout the country. The scheme allowed for the purchase of equipment for sport, arts, adventure and other much needed items. Some €6.35 million was made available nationally, of which more than €230,000 has been allocated in respect of clubs and groups operating in Kildare and Wicklow.

In 2018, €58.9 million has been allocated in current funding to support the provision of youth services. The funding allocations to all organisations to support the provision of youth services throughout the country, including Kildare Youth Services, are currently being finalised within my Department.

**Cyberbullying Issues**

400. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs to outline the ongoing efforts by her Department to counteract internet bullying in respect of children and young adults outside of an educational environment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19135/18]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** I am conscious of the issue referred to by the Deputy. The internet is an increasingly valuable resource for everyone, including children and young people, but it also exposes people to new risks, including the risk of cyberbullying.

A range of Government Departments and agencies have a role in relation to internet safety, including: the Department of Justice and Equality, which has responsibility for the Office of Internet Safety; the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment, which has functional responsibility for internet providers; and the Department of Education and Skills, which leads on the implementation of the Action Plan on Bullying. While my Department does not have a lead responsibility in these areas, I am conscious that issues emerging in relation to online safety require a whole of government approach. In this regard, the Department of the
Taoiseach is currently developing an Action Plan on online safety and my Department is participating in this process.

The Children First Act 2015 places a number of statutory obligations on organisations providing relevant services to children. These obligations include: a requirement to keep children safe from harm while they are availing of the service; a requirement to carry out a risk assessment; and a requirement to prepare a child safeguarding statement which sets out the policies and procedures which are in place to mitigate these risks. My Department plans to amend the Children First Guidance to include a specific reference to the need to consider online safety in the completion of a Child Safeguarding Statement.

**Youth Services Provision**

401. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs to outline the extent to which research has been undertaken to identify the most common causes of concern and stress among young persons in modern times; the extent to which corrective measures can be put in place; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19137/18]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** Concerns and stress, at different levels of severity, experienced by children and young people can arise from many aspects of their lives, from issues related to, for example, their home or school life, physical or mental health, health risk behaviours, parental relationships, friendship networks, social disadvantage, life experiences as a being part of minority or marginalised group, being a victim of crime or involvement with criminality. Appropriate corrective measures would depend on both the source and severity of such concerns or stress.

As part of the Government-funded Growing Up in Ireland Study, and through other funded research and PhD scholarship programmes, my Department supports a number of research studies, key findings and data outputs relating to our understanding of the lives and experiences of children and young people in Ireland. Many of these are on topics related to aspects of children’s lives which may be a source of stress or concern for them, for example, on relationships and friendship networks, experiences of bullying or discrimination, social disadvantage, inequality and mental health issues, and social and emotional outcomes for young people.

My Department also publishes a range of indicator data on the lives of children and young people in the form of the biennial State of the Nation’s Children (SONC) reports and in the Better Outcomes Brighter Futures (BOBF) indicator set. Both these sets include indicators on areas commonly associated with concern or stress among young people, including some which were identified through a review of consultations with children. These include relationships with parents, parental mental health, home environment, self-perception, body image, schoolwork load and exam stress.

My Department supports a range of initiatives and programmes to support children and young people, including among disadvantaged, marginalised and vulnerable groups, across the many aspects of their lives that may give rise to concern or stress. This includes through the many actions supporting children and young people that are committed to in a number of Department of Children and Youth Affairs strategies, such as Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures, the national policy framework for children and young people and the National Youth Strategy. In this context also is the provision of funding for youth programmes and services. In addition, the Child and Family Agency, Tusla, which is funded by my Department, provides funding under the Prevention, Partnership and Family Support Programme and also for mental health supports for young people. The Deputy may wish to consult with other Departments with regard
to studies that inform related policy in their respective Departments.

**Charities Regulation**

402. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development if the role of the Charities Regulator in the removal of a mural at a centre (details supplied) will be investigated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18721/18]

**Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring):** The Charities Regulatory Authority was established in October 2014 pursuant to the Charities Act 2009. The Authority is the State organisation responsible for registering and regulating all of Ireland’s charities. Its role is to provide effective and robust regulation in accordance with the 2009 Act.

My Department has been assigned overall policy responsibility for the Charities Regulator. However, the Authority is fully independent in the performance of its statutory functions, including any decisions in relation to enforcement matters. Neither I nor my Department have any role in the decision making process of the Authority.

**Town and Village Renewal Scheme**

403. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development to outline the status of the roll-out of a pilot scheme aimed at providing cash incentives to persons to entice them to restore old properties in rural Ireland; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18547/18]

**Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring):** A pilot scheme to encourage residential occupancy in rural towns and villages is currently being developed as part of the Town and Village Renewal Scheme which is administered by my Department. The pilot will consider ways in which properties that are currently not in use in town centres can be renovated to allow them to be used for residential purposes. This will help to rejuvenate town centres while also contributing to the housing needs of individuals.

I have established a Steering Group to oversee the design and delivery of the pilot scheme. The Steering Group is chaired by my Department, and involves a number of other key Departments and agencies, including the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, the Department of Finance, and the County and City Management Association which provides representation from the Local Authority sector.

This is a complex issue, but work in relation to developing the pilot scheme is ongoing and I expect that substantial progress will be made in developing the pilot over the coming months. This pilot has the capacity to inform future initiatives for town centre renewal under the new €1 billion Rural Regeneration and Development Fund which was announced by the Government recently as part of Project Ireland 2040.

**Community Services Programme**

404. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development if a community service contract in respect of a sports and recreation club (details supplied) will be reviewed following the submission of an updated business plan; and if he will make a statement...
on the matter. [18710/18]

**Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring):** The Community Services Programme (CSP) supports around 400 community organisations to provide local services through a social enterprise model with funding provided as a contribution to the cost of a manager and an agreed number of full-time equivalent positions. Some €46 million will be provided under the programme in 2018.

The organisation in question submitted a business plan to Pobal in 2017 as part of the normal CSP re-contracting process. The business plan failed to satisfy key CSP appraisal criteria, in particular there were concerns about the organisation’s continued financial sustainability.

The organisation is approved for funding until end-December 2018 and has been invited to resubmit an application under the CSP re-contracting process for 2019-2021. The deadline for receipt of applications was 30 April 2018. An application has been received from the organisation and a decision will be made following completion of the re-contracting process in the coming months.

**Community Services Programme**

405. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development when the community services programme administered through Pobal will be open to new applications; if a tidy towns committee will be eligible to apply for staff through this programme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18966/18]

**Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring):** The Community Services Programme (CSP) supports some 400 community organisations to provide local services through a social enterprise model, with funding provided as a contribution to the cost of a manager and an agreed number of full-time equivalent positions. Some €46 million will be provided to social enterprises under the programme in 2018.

My Department continues to accept expressions of interest under the programme and funding for new organisations will be considered, in light of available budgets, during the year.

However, to be eligible for support, an organisation must be a social enterprise capable of generating income from its activities. CSP funding is a fixed annual contribution and does not meet the full salary cost of supported posts. Accordingly, the CSP contribution must be co-funded by the organisation concerned from other sources, for example, from income received from the public use of their facilities and services.

**Community Development Initiatives**

406. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development to outline the status of his Department’s review of local community development committees; the improvements that have been made as a result of this review in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19059/18]

**Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring):** Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs) have been established in all 31 local authority areas since Autumn 2015. They were established for the purpose of bringing about a more joined-up approach to local and community development in their respective areas. They typically comprise between 15 and 19 members, with stakeholders drawn from public bodies, as well as
local development, community and voluntary, social inclusion and a range of other community interests.

A review of LCDCs was commenced in October 2017. The objective of the review is to develop an understanding of the LCDC landscape nationwide and the challenges facing the structures, identify opportunities for strengthening and enhancing them, and to make recommendations for their ongoing and future development.

A Steering Group has been established to oversee the review. It is chaired by an official from the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection and includes members drawn from my own Department, local authorities and the North West Regional Assembly.

My Department has undertaken a very broad consultation process and an analysis of the data collected is ongoing. The review will culminate with a report outlining the key findings and conclusions, and setting out recommendations for future development of the structures. I anticipate a draft report will be submitted for my consideration early in Q3, 2018.

It is too early to comment on possible improvements at this stage of the review process.

**RAPID Programme**

407. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development to outline his plans to increase the funding allocated to the RAPID programme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [19060/18]

**Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring):** There is an allocation of €6 million for RAPID in 2018, an increase of €1 million on last year. Of this, €3.5 million is ring-fenced for the Dublin North East Inner City (DNEIC) area. The funding is being used towards addressing specific community structural issues including community engagement, social employment and community development, and to support local community and youth projects.

€2 million is allocated to the national stream of the recast RAPID programme, which was launched in 2017 and replaced the original RAPID programme.

€0.5 million is ring-fenced to satisfy legacy commitments under the original RAPID Programme, which operated a number of years ago.

My Department is currently developing proposals for a new Programme which will replace the RAPID scheme and I hope to make an announcement on this over the coming weeks.

**Free Travel Scheme Eligibility**

408. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection to outline her plans to allow old age pensioners who avail of the free travel scheme and who travel on trains to receive a return ticket rather than queuing for a ticket each way; if there would be a cost to permitting return tickets to be allowed; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18857/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Customers who wish to avail of free travel must have their free travel pass with them when travelling. Customers must present their pass at the ticket desk in the train station in order to
be issued with their free rail ticket when travelling on Iarnród Éireann mainline, Dart and Outer Suburban services. Where a customer is making a return journey on the same day they will receive a day return ticket. In all other cases, customers are issued with a single journey ticket.

Payment to Iarnród Éireann is part of a block payment my Department makes to CIÉ in respect of the free travel scheme. Whilst there is no cost implication in permitting the issue of return tickets on all train journeys, the Deputy will appreciate that the practice of issuing single journey tickets minimises the opportunity for misuse of the free travel pass.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

**Personal Public Service Numbers**

409. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if issues exist in terms of spousal inheritance for wives who previously had their personal public service number changed upon marriage should they be pre-deceased by their husbands. [18548/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** While it is the Department’s policy that “Level W” Personal Public Service (PPS) Numbers (the husband’s number with a W at the end) should, for data protection reasons, be replaced with a separate number, such numbers remain valid PPS Numbers.

Queries in relation to taxation issues should be addressed to the Department of Finance and the Revenue Commissioners.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

**Public Services Card Data**

410. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection further to Parliamentary Question No. 939 of 20 March 2018 if her Department holds biometric data on individuals in possession of a public services card in view of the fact that a recent e-tender (details supplied) for the provision of facial recognition software for the public services card explicitly states that the supplier must provide the tools and processes to migrate up to 4 million biographic and face biometric records from the legacy system database to the new system; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18565/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The use of facial matching technology has been successfully employed by the Department for a number of years. What is proposed, in the context of this competitive tender process, is a continuation and upgrade of this existing technology.

The Public Services Card does not store biometrics. While the card does store the person’s photograph and it appears on the card, it does not store the biometric or arithmetic template of that photograph. Nor is the biometric or arithmetic template of the photo stored in the PSI dataset or shared with other public bodies.

My Department uses facial image matching software to strengthen the SAFE registration process. The normal digital photograph in JPEG format is captured during the SAFE registration process and is inputted into and stored in this facial image matching software. It is then modelled and searched against the Department’s photo database to ensure that the person in the
photograph has not already been registered using a different Personal Public Service Number or a different identity dataset.

The software compares photographs by converting the image into an arithmetic template based on the individual’s facial characteristics and checking it against the other image templates already held in that software’s database from other SAFE registrations. It is a similar approach to that taken by the Passport Office in its systems when processing passport applications/renewals.

The arithmetic models behind the photographs are never stored on the PSC or in the Public Service Identity dataset. They are stored only in the facial image matching software’s database held in the Department’s own secure data centres.

The Department does not ask for or collect biometric data from our customers e.g. fingerprints or retinal scans. Neither does it use advanced facial mapping cameras when taking the photo as part of the SAFE registration process. The process involves the digital photos collected being passed through a piece of facial matching software to detect and prevent error or suspected fraudulent activity.

The database mentioned in the facial image matching tender is referring to a dedicated facial matching server which is hosted in a secure site within the Department. Facial templates are loaded to a dedicated facial matcher server.

The current matching system is over 5 years old and upgrading the system will result in achieving significantly improved matching accuracy which, in turn, will lead to increased efficiencies and effectiveness for the Department. The process will involve the application of the upgraded algorithm to all of the facial templates currently on the facial matching server in order to improve matching accuracy.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Public Services Card Data

411. Deputy Catherine Murphy asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection to set out the amount her Department expects to incur in costs with regard to the supply of facial image matching software over the duration of the initial contract; if she has included an option to extend the duration of the contract as per the request for tenders dated 20 April 2018; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18572/18]

412. Deputy Catherine Murphy asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if processes will be added to the public services card renewal process that involve the use of facial recognition software; the reason this software will be required as part of a renewal of a card; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18574/18]

414. Deputy Catherine Murphy asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection to outline the way in which a sample (details supplied) of 100,000 photographs will be chosen regarding the new facial recognition software that her Department is requesting tenders for; if persons will be contacted and asked to give consent to their image or photograph being used in this manner; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18576/18]

416. Deputy Catherine Murphy asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection to outline the reason facial image matching software is required as per her request for tenders of 20 April 2018; the way in which the software will be utilised by her Department;
the products that will be used in conjunction with same; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18601/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 411, 412, 414 and 416 together.

The use of facial matching technology has been successfully employed by the Department for a number of years. What is proposed, in the context of this competitive tender process, is a continuation and upgrade of this existing technology.

My Department uses facial image matching software to strengthen the SAFE registration process. The normal digital photograph in JPEG format is captured during the SAFE registration process and is inputted into and stored in this facial image matching software. It is then modelled and searched against the Department’s photo database to ensure that the person in the photograph has not already been registered using a different Personal Public Service Number or a different identity dataset.

The software compares photographs by converting the image into an arithmetic template based on the individual’s facial characteristics and checking it against the other image templates already held in that software’s database from other SAFE registrations. It is a similar approach to that taken by the Passport Office in its systems when processing passport applications/renewals.

The current matching system is over 5 years old and upgrading the system will result in achieving significantly improved matching accuracy which, in turn, will lead to increased efficiencies and effectiveness for my Department.

It is important to note that the application of this technology has detected a number of cases of serious identity fraud some of which have been successfully prosecuted through the courts on indictment, with significant custodial sentences being imposed.

In accordance with Government policy, the Department is running an open procurement for the provision of the services as described in the request for tender (RFT). Public procurement is governed by well-established EU and national rules and guidelines. The aim of these rules is to promote an open, competitive and non-discriminatory public procurement regime which delivers best value for money.

All tenders received in response to this procurement competition will be evaluated on the basis of criteria outlined in the RFT.

Using facial matching software allows an individual to renew their PSC online without having to visit a DEASP office and undergo the full SAFE registration again.

The Department will ensure that testing will take place on its premises only.

I hope this clarifies the matters for the Deputy.

**Public Services Card Authentication**

413. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of registrations to SAFE level 2 that have taken place since SAFE registration began in 2011; the number and or estimate of possible further persons that will require SAFE registration; the number of new SAFE level 2 registrations that are forecast per annum; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18575/18]
Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): There are 2.72 million adults registered to SAFE Level 2 ("SAFE2"), which is the minimum standard of identity authentication for issue of a Public Services Card.

SAFE registrations to date in 2018 are averaging 10,000 people a week, the vast majority of whom complete registration to SAFE2 at the first appointment, or on a return appointment. On completion of the registration process, they are issued a Public Services Card as a physical token of authenticated identity.

SAFE2 identity verification is currently required for:
- Access to social welfare services - including Child Benefit and Treatment Benefits;
- First time adult passport applicants in the State;
- Replacement of lost, stolen or damaged passports issued prior to January 2005, where the person is resident in the State;
- Citizenship applications;
- Driver Theory Test Applicants; and
- Access to high value or personal online public services via MyGovId, the identity authentication mechanism for accessing public services online.

The number of further persons for whom completion of SAFE2 registration will be required, is dependent on the extent of public service bodies or their agents (i.e. organisations working on their behalf or performing one of their public functions under contract), which are specified in Section 262 of the Social Welfare Consolidation Act, 2005 (as amended), that adopt the SAFE registration standard in the future. Additionally, there will also be the need to replace existing cards as and when they expire.

The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform recently published the eGovernment Strategy 2017 – 2020 which lists a number of public services for which SAFE2 registration will be required. The SAFE2 transition plans for each service, including communications, are being developed by the Departments/agencies concerned, working with the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO) in the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

*Question No. 414 answered with Question No. 411.*

Rent Supplement Scheme Appeals

415. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if the appropriate rent supplement to which a person (details supplied) otherwise would be entitled will be refunded; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18577/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): As detailed to the Deputy in reply to Parliamentary Question No. 16716-18 of 17/4/18, the person concerned has not, to date, submitted to the Department documentation requested on 6/9/17 in order for their rent supplement claim to be reviewed.

Should the person concerned submit the required documentation, their continued entitlement to rent supplement, to include any arrears due, can be assessed accordingly.
I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

*Question No. 416 answered with Question No. 411.*

**Social Welfare Benefits Eligibility**

417. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when her Department’s report into barriers facing seasonal workers accessing social welfare payments in County Donegal will be published and made available; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18714/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** My Department’s main social welfare schemes for people who are unemployed are the jobseeker’s allowance and the jobseekers benefit schemes. Both schemes provide significant support to individuals so that they can work up to 3 days a week and still retain access to a reduced jobseeker’s payment. The 2018 Estimates for my Department provide for expenditure this year on the jobseeker’s schemes of €2.17 billion.

An Taoiseach, in his previous role as Minister for Social Protection, gave a commitment at Dáil report stage of the Social Welfare Bill 2016 that he would ask officials to examine the issue of jobseeker’s benefit and the treatment of part-time and seasonal workers, including those categorised as having a subsidiary employment. My Department has completed a report on jobseekers benefit and the treatment of seasonal and part time workers which I am examining.

On 7th December 2017, I published the Employment (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2017. The Bill delivers on the commitment in the Programme for a Partnership Government to tackle the problems caused by the increased casualisation of work and strengthen the regulation of precarious work. The Bill completed Second Stage in the Dáil on 15th February 2018 and Committee Stage is scheduled for 17th May next.

This very important piece of legislation will improve the security and predictability of working hours for employees on insecure contracts and those working variable hours in all sectors of employment.

My Department is currently collating data on jobseekers benefit recipients in subsidiary employment. We will have 12 months of data gathered by May 2018 at which point I will be in a better position to make an informed decision on this issue.

I intend to submit the report on jobseekers benefit and the treatment of seasonal and part time workers to the Joint Oireachtas Committee. The report will be published subsequently and will be made available to all members.

**Public Services Card Data**

418. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection further to Parliamentary Question No. 939 of 20 March 2018, the purpose of the latest tender by her Department for facial recognition software; and her plans to expand the use of public service cards beyond SAFE level 2. [18719/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The use of facial matching technology has been employed by the Department for a number of years. What is proposed, in the context of this competitive tender process, is a continuation and up-
grade of this existing technology. This technology helps prevent and detect cases of suspected social welfare and identity fraud.

The Department uses facial image matching software to strengthen the SAFE registration process. The normal digital photograph in JPEG format is captured during the SAFE registration process. It is inputted into and stored in this facial image matching software and is then modelled and searched against the Department’s photo database to ensure that the person in the photograph has not already been registered using a different Personal Public Service Number or a different identity dataset. The software compares photographs by converting the image into an arithmetic template based on the individual’s facial characteristics and checking it against the other image templates already held in that software’s database from other SAFE registrations. It is a similar approach to that taken by the Passport Office in its systems when processing passport applications/renewals.

The Public Services Card does not store biometrics. Nor is the biometric or arithmetic template of the photo stored in the PSI dataset or shared with other public bodies.

The current matching system is over 5 years old and upgrading the system will result in achieving significantly improved matching accuracy which, in turn, will lead to increased efficiencies and effectiveness for my Department. The process will involve the application of the upgraded algorithm to all of the facial templates currently on the facial matching server in order to improve matching accuracy.

In conclusion, my Department currently has no plans to extend SAFE registration beyond that of SAFE level 2.

I hope that this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Disability Allowance Applications

419. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of a disability allowance application by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18739/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): This lady submitted an application for disability allowance (DA) on 21 February 2018. Their application, based upon all the evidence submitted, was refused on medical grounds as it was not found that this lady was substantially restricted in taking up employment.

She was notified in writing of this decision on 26 April 2018 and was also notified of their right to request a review of this decision or to appeal it to the independent Social Welfare Appeals Office (SWAO).

I trust this clarifies the matter for the deputy.

Disability Allowance Applications

420. **Deputy Mick Barry** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection further to Parliamentary Question No. 588 of 27 March 2018, if her response will be reviewed in view of the fact that the house co-owned by a person (details supplied) is occupied by members of their extended family and therefore they cannot divest their interest in it nor profit from
it via rental income. [18741/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): In relation to the assessment of the property it has been reviewed and is still deemed as assessable at half the value. The property is not personally used or enjoyed by the customer or his spouse, and as such could be put to profitable use.

A letter regarding the revised decision issued to the customer on the 23 March 2018. It is open to him to request a review or an appeal of this decision.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the deputy.

Disability Allowance Applications

421. Deputy Brendan Howlin asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when a decision will issue on a disability allowance claim by a person (details supplied) in County Wexford; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18805/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): This gentleman’s Disability Allowance (DA) was stopped on 31 January 2016 as he commenced on Back to Work Allowance (BTWA).

The person concerned informed us that his BTWA was ceasing on 28 March 2018 and he wished to have his DA re-instated. The file was sent to a Social Welfare Inspector (SWI) for a report on the person’s means and circumstances as he is now Self Employed.

On 23 April 2018 the person concerned was asked to supply supporting documentation required by the deciding officer in order to make a decision on his eligibility. On receipt of this information a decision will be made and he will be notified of the outcome.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Disability Allowance Applications

422. Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an application by a person (details supplied) for a disability allowance; and when a decision will be made on his or her case. [18870/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): I confirm that my department received an application for disability allowance from this gentleman on 11 December 2017. The processing time for individual DA claims may vary in accordance with their relative complexity in terms of the three main qualifying criteria, the person’s circumstances and the information they provide in support of their claim.

On 9 March 2018, 28 March 2018, 13 April 2018 and 25 April 2018 they were asked to supply supporting documentation required by the deciding officer in order to make a decision on his eligibility.

On receipt of this information and on completion of the necessary investigations on all aspects of the claim a decision will be made and the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.
I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

**Homeless Persons Supports**

423. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the measures available from her Department to assist a person (details supplied) in order to extricate themselves from homelessness; her plans to address this anomaly for persons in similar situations under 25 years of age; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18920/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The person concerned has been in receipt of Jobseeker’s Allowance since 30th December 2013 and had availed of the Back to Education programme which afforded him the higher weekly rate of payment for Jobseekers Allowance.

In March of this year the person concerned withdrew from the Back to Education programme, he was then referred to the Homeless Persons Unit, North Cumberland Street where he met with a Community Welfare Officer who provided an Exceptional Needs Payment (ENP) and attempted to engage with the him regarding his circumstances and how the Department might best be able to assist him at the time.

Unfortunately the person concerned has disengaged from our services. A Community Welfare Officer in the Homeless Persons Unit is attempting to contact the person to determine if we can be of any assistance to him. The person concerned may also present to the Homeless Persons Unit if they wish to progress the matter.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

**Departmental Staff Recruitment**

424. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the reason persons are being recruited to her Department while at the same time employees in the carer’s allowance section are being let go; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18936/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** My Department, like all Government departments and agencies is required to operate within a staff ceiling figure and a commensurate administrative staffing budget, which for this Department has involved reductions in staff.

The staffing needs for all areas within the Department are continuously reviewed, taking account of workloads, management priorities and the ongoing need to respond to new increasing demands in a wide range of services. This is to ensure that the best use is made of all available resources with a view to providing an efficient service to those who rely on the schemes operated by the Department.

Permanent staff are recruited for a number of reasons: to provide additional resources to priority work areas; to replace staff who have been promoted or transferred elsewhere; and to replace staff who have resigned or retired from the Department. From January 2017 to January 2018, 12 permanent staff were recruited to the Carer’s Allowance section.

Temporary clerical staff are recruited to cover absences of permanent staff on maternity
leave, long term sick leave, other statutory leave and also to provide cover for some staff avail-
ing of the shorter working year scheme. They are also recruited to alleviate work pressure in
certain areas, and to assist in the roll-out of the Public Services Card project.

Temporary contracts are offered for a fixed term or a fixed purpose. In the case of a fixed
purpose contract the term can vary according to the purpose of the contract. All temporary con-
tracts are kept under review and are terminated when the purpose for the contract has ceased.

**Departmental Staff Recruitment**

425. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protec-
tion if the employment contract of a person (details supplied) will be extended; and if she will
make a statement on the matter. [18937/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):**
Temporary clerical staff are recruited to provide cover for permanent staff who are absent on
maternity leave, long term sick leave, shorter working year scheme and other statutory leave.
They are also recruited to clear backlogs and to assist in the roll-out of the Public Services Card
project.

Temporary staff are appointed on a fixed-term or fixed purpose contract basis. Once the
purpose for which the person is recruited no longer exists the contract is terminated.

The person referred to was recruited from the Public Appointments Service temporary cler-
ical officer panel in July 2014. The purpose for his fixed purpose contract was specifically to
deal with the backlog of claims in Longford while awaiting the assignment of permanent staff.

Following the recent assignment of permanent staff to the location, the requirement for the
temporary clerical support has now ceased and there are no plans to extend the relevant con-
tracts beyond the given notice date.

**Domiciliary Care Allowance Appeals**

426. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social
Protection the status of an appeal to a decision on a domiciliary care allowance application by a
person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19001/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The
Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was
referred to an Appeals Officer on 5th April 2018, who will make a summary decision on the ap-
peal based on the documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing.

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

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

**Carer’s Allowance Applications**

427. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Pro-
tection the status of a carer’s allowance application by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19008/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):**

Carer’s allowance (CA) is a means-tested social assistance payment made to a person who is habitually resident in the State and who is providing full-time care and attention to a person who has such a disability that they require that level of care.

CA was awarded to the person concerned on 26 April 2018 and the first payment will issue to his nominated bank account on 3 May 2018.

Arrears of allowance due from 25 January 2018 to 2 May 2018 will also issue. The person concerned was notified of these details on 26 April 2018.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

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**Social Insurance**

428. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection her views on whether the criteria to receive PRSI treatment benefit is resulting in the discrimination of young persons; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19023/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):**

Entitlement to treatment benefit is based on having paid PRSI contributions, with customers required to have a certain number of PRSI contributions paid or credited in order to qualify. The number of contributions required varies with age, to take account of the capacity of the person concerned to have paid the required contributions. For example, a customer aged 20 needs a total of 39 qualifying PRSI weeks paid, while someone aged 30 needs 260, plus 39 in the governing contribution year (which this year is 2016).

The contribution conditions applying to the scheme and the precise age at which the conditions change are kept under review. I also wish to assure the Deputy that all PRSI contributions paid are retained on the customer’s record and even if they are not sufficient to provide treatment benefit cover at present, they will help towards the provision of cover in the future.

I trust this helps clarify the position.

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**Working Family Payment Data**

429. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of families in receipt of FIS in circumstances in which the worker is employed in the public sector or the semi-State sector by public or semi-State areas; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19025/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):**

Working Family Payment (WFP) formerly known as Family Income Supplement (FIS) is a weekly tax-free payment which provides additional income support to employees on low earnings with children.

There are currently some 3,423 families in receipt of WFP who are employed in the public sector.
The Department is unable to provide a detailed breakdown of the number of families in receipt of WFP who are employed in the semi-State sector.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Social Insurance

430. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if she will address a matter (details supplied) regarding an assessment under Scope; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19027/18]

431. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if a matter regarding persons (details supplied) will be addressed; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19033/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 430 and 431 together.

The Scope insurability section of my Department makes statutory decisions on the insurability of employment under the Social Welfare Acts. It deals with employers, employees and the self-employed, who may apply, where there is doubt, to have an employment or self-employment status investigated and the correct class of pay-related social insurance (PRSI) determined. Scope section can also determine if a person genuinely worked in a partnership and to do so will require that the person or persons concerned apply to it for a determination and provide any details necessary to assist with the determination.

The persons concerned should apply to Scope section to have the circumstances of their partnership status investigated. The address is Gandon House, Amiens Street, Dublin 1 and phone number is (01) 6732585.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

State Pensions Payments

432. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the amount spent by her Department on State pension payments in 2017; and the number of recipients for each payment. [19042/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The total amounts spent on State Pension payments in 2017 and the number of recipients of each payment is detailed in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pension Type</th>
<th>Amount (€000)</th>
<th>Recipient numbers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State Pension (Contributory)</td>
<td>4,915,853</td>
<td>394,378</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Pension (Non-Contributory)</td>
<td>994,740</td>
<td>95,140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Pension (Transition)</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widows'/Widowers'/Surviving Civil Partners (Contributory) Pension</td>
<td>1,466,597</td>
<td>121,091</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Questions - Written Answers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Widows’/Widowers’/Surviving Civil Partners (Non-Contributory) Pension</th>
<th>14,226</th>
<th>1,490*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Death Benefit</td>
<td>9,371</td>
<td>700*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Average Recipient numbers

The above amounts provided for 2017 are provisional and are subject to audit by the Controller and Auditor General.

**Disability Allowance Eligibility**

433. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the rationale for asking parents of teenage children with a disability to complete the section of the application form for disability allowance entitled authority to appoint an agent; the position on the retention of receipts for disability allowance; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19049/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath):** Where a customer is unable to manage their own financial affairs an agent may be appointed to collect the payment and if necessary act on behalf of the customer.

The circumstances in which a customer is deemed to be unable to manage his or her own financial affairs may include one or more of the following:

- an inability to understand the basis of possible entitlements to benefit;
- an inability to understand and complete the claim form;
- an inability to understand and deal with correspondence and enquiries concerning the claim;
- an inability to manage benefit payments received.

If a deciding officer identifies that, based on evidence provided, that an agent may be required to either collect the payment on behalf of the customer and if necessary act on behalf of the customer, then they may request that an agent form be completed.

In this type of situation, a formal application must be made on behalf of the customer and documentary evidence provided. If the customer is unable to manage their own affairs then they must be certified by a registered medical practitioner to be a person who is unable for the time being to manage their own financial affairs.

The agent appointed may or may not be a relative of the customer. Once appointed, they have a duty to act in the best interests of the customer. Amongst their duties is the responsibility to:

- receive and deal with any sum payable by way of benefit on behalf of the customer;
- make payments only on items or services which are of benefit to the customer;
- ensure the balance of any benefit is lodged to an interest bearing account for the benefit of the customer;
- keep a record of all sums received by way of benefit which have been lodged to an interest
bearing account on behalf of the customer;

- keep a record of all other transactions made in relation to sums received by way of benefit on behalf of the customer;

- produce these records when requested to do so by the customer or by their nearest relative or by an officer of the department;

- notify the Department of any changes in the customer’s circumstances.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

**Legislative Process**

434. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the stage the provision set out in section 5 of the Social Welfare, Pensions and Civil Registration Bill 2017 is at to enable customers to volunteer their public services card in circumstances in which they wish to use it as a form of proof of identity and or age; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19050/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The Social Welfare, Pensions and Civil Registration Bill 2017 including the provision set out in section 5 has passed the Second Stage, which was concluded on 4 October 2017.

It is expected that the Bill will progress to Committee Stage in the coming months.

I hope this clarifies the position for the Deputy.

**Labour Activation Measures**

435. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the timeline for the changes which will enable persons on JobPath to participate on Tús and community employment schemes. [19071/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The primary goal of my Department’s activation services is to move people from unemployment to full-time and sustained employment. All jobseekers are required to engage with the Department’s activation service irrespective of whether the service is provided by the Department’s own case officers or those advisors employed by external contractors such as the JobPath providers.

Currently, once a jobseeker is referred to JobPath, they are required to complete the requisite time with the service and will not be referred to a Work Placement programme such as Community Employment (CE) and Tús, as they can only participate with one activation service at a time.

Having listened to the Department’s customers and those delivering local services, I was happy to announce that from 1 June this year, customers currently engaged with the JobPath service and those who may be referred in future will have the option of applying for CE and Tús placement while continuing to engage with JobPath.

This has a number of benefits both for the vital services provided at a local level by participants on CE and Tús programmes and directly for the Department’s customers. It maximises...
the assistance and services for people who are long-term unemployed through a combination of a quality work placement and personalised job seeking support provided through the JobPath service.

I am confident that our customers will benefit from the job seeking support of the JobPath service while also availing of part-time work experience and quality training and development opportunities provided by a Work Placement programme.

I trust this clarifies matters for the Deputy.

Labour Activation Programmes Data

436. Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the percentage and number of unskilled workers over 50 years of age who received full-time employment through Turas Nua from April 2016 to April 2017; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19116/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): My Department provides a range of activation supports catering for long-term unemployed job-seekers and those most distant from the labour market to secure and sustain full-time paid employment. These supports include the JobPath service. The JobPath service is designed to support people who are long-term unemployed to secure and sustain paid employment. This service is delivered by two companies, Seetec Ltd and Turas Nua Ltd.

My Department does not collate and process outcomes based on skills profile of clients nor are there defined categories such as skilled or unskilled and therefore the specific information requested by the Deputy is not available. However, I can advise the Deputy that approximately 73,000 Jobseekers started their engagement with JobPath service between April 2016 and April 2017, and some 20,500 or 28% were over the age of 50.

Of this cohort, some 63% had been unemployed for over three years and a further 11% were over two years unemployed.

My department has commenced an econometric review of the JobPath service which, it is expected, will assist in accurately estimating the impact of JobPath interventions on people’s labour market outcomes. My department is developing a new approach using a cluster analysis. The review will split long term jobseekers who have engaged with JobPath into clusters based on age, gender, location employment history, education and so forth. The review will then examine the actual interventions which each of these clusters experienced and using a statistical analysis to identify which interventions led to the best outcomes for each cohort. This will provide a sound evidential base for the improvement of existing activation services and the design of new ones.

Work on this review has commenced and it is expected to be completed by Q4 2018.

I trust that this information is of some assistance to the Deputy.

Departmental Expenditure

437. Deputy Eamon Ryan asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the administrative cost of means-testing each social welfare payment which is subject to means-testing in 2016 and 2017; the cost of administering all non-means tested social welfare
payments in 2016 and 2017, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19117/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** My Department’s administration expenditure is split between Vote (means tested schemes) and Social Insurance Fund (non-means tested schemes). Details of the total administration expenditure for 2016 and 2017 are outlined in the following table. These costs also include services provided for and charged to my Department by other Departments and Agencies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Administration Category</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017 (Provisional Figures)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>€000</td>
<td>€000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vote 37</td>
<td>309,088</td>
<td>343,666</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Insurance Fund</td>
<td>272,632</td>
<td>274,014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>581,720</td>
<td>617,680</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

**Pensions Reform**

438. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the position regarding the design of a total contributions State pension model; when it will be released for public consultation; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19119/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Firstly, the new interim Total Contributions Approach to determining the level of payment, including the introduction of the new HomeCaring credit, for recipients of the State Pension (contributory) affected by the 2012 rate band changes was agreed by the Government in January. Instructions for legislation to give effect to this change are currently being set out. When drafted, the legislation will be brought forward at the next available opportunity. Changes in payment level for those pensioners who benefit will be effective from 30 March 2018.

Separately, my Department is planning for the introduction of a Total Contributions Approach for all new pensioners from 2020 onwards. A final decision on the design of the scheme and how it will operate will be made by the Government following a period of consultation which I expect to launch in the coming weeks.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

**Pensions Reform**

439. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of her plans to allow post-2012 pension recipients on reduced rates to utilise the total contributions model by 2019; the first and full-year cost of this measure; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19120/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** A policy to introduce the Total Contributions Approach (TCA) to the State Pension contributory (SPC) calculation was adopted by Government in the National Pensions Framework in 2010, as was the decision to base the entitlements of all new pensioners on this approach from around 2020.

The Government announced in January 2018 that those affected by the 2012 rate band
changes will also have the option of availing of a TCA-based pension, if it is to their advantage. The TCA model being made available to them will award a maximum rate pension for those with 40 years contributions (including up to 20 years HomeCaring credits), and pro-rata payments for those with fewer contributions. Up to 10 years ordinary credits (e.g. for Jobseekers or Illness Benefit) may also be used, subject to the total number of HomeCaring and ordinary credits not exceeding 20 years.

Preparations for this change are being advanced by officials in my Department, notably in the areas of legislation, administration, and IT-related work. I expect my officials to begin writing to people affected by the 2012 rate band changes before the end of the year and for the first payments to be made in the 1st Quarter of 2019.

The cost in 2019 of introducing TCA for those who reached state pension age after September 2012 will depend on a number of factors. These include the likely take-up of HomeCaring Credits, particularly among men. Current estimates suggest that the full year cost in respect of 2019 may be in the region of €35 million for people already in receipt of a State pension (contributory). However, this figure does not include expected inflows from other schemes such as State pension (non contributory) and from Increase for Qualified Adult payments, who have not previously made an SPC claim. Additionally, payments made in 2019 will also include arrears payments in respect of 2018 as payments will be effective from 30 March 2018 where applicable. Therefore, the total cost in 2019 will not be evident until next year.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Social Insurance

440. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the position regarding the development of a consultation paper on a rate setting or funding approach for the Social Insurance Fund; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19121/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The Deputy is referring to a commitment in the Roadmap for Pensions Reform 2018-2023 which was published on 28 February 2018 that a consultation paper be published on an appropriate rate-setting/funding approach for the Social Insurance Fund by the end of Quarter 4 2018.

The consultation paper will be informed by the Roadmap and in particular by the findings of the Actuarial Review of the Social Insurance fund (SIF) as at 31 December 2015, published in October 2017, which was carried out by independent consultants, KPMG. This is a review required by legislation. 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 over the next two years 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.
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.

These costs assume that the cost of extending invalidity pension to the self-employed builds up steeply for the first 10 years after introduction after which time the scheme is almost at maturity or a steady state.

For the shorter term schemes, illness and jobseeker’s benefits, it is estimated that they will reach maturity after 2 years. Projected expenditure on jobseeker’s benefit assumes the same incidence rate as prevail in the employed (PRSI Class A) population.

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 play an important role in informing the overall debate on policy developments in relation to the SIF 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. The Actuarial Review provides government with a timely and evidence-led opportunity to undertake a full review of our social insurance system and to consult with stakeholders.

Work has commenced on preparation of the consultation paper in my Department with a view to adhering to the timetable set out in the Pensions Roadmap.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

State Pension (Contributory) Expenditure

441. Deputy Willie O’Dea asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the progress she has made to set a formal benchmark target of 34% of average earnings for State pension (contributory) payments and institute a process whereby future changes in pension rates of payment are explicitly linked to changes in the consumer price index and average wages; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [19122/18]
Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The level of income provided to pensioners in the form of the State pension is currently decided through the annual budget process. The Roadmap for Pensions Reform commits the Government to examine and develop proposals this year. In order to protect the adequacy into the future the Government intends to examine and develop proposals to set a formal benchmark target of 34% of average earnings for the State pension (contributory), and institute a process whereby future changes in pension rates of payment are explicitly linked to changes in the consumer price index.

Preliminary work has commenced to support the development of these proposals. It is intended that a detailed proposal on this matter will be developed before the end of this year for consideration by the Government.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Housing Grant Payments

442. Deputy Mattie McGrath asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the housing insulation or energy efficiency grants his Department is supporting for social housing tenants; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18760/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Local authorities are currently undertaking an ambitious programme of insulation retrofitting, with the support of my Department, on the least energy efficient social homes. The aim of the Energy Efficiency Retrofitting Programme is the improvement of energy efficiency and comfort levels in local authority homes, benefitting those at risk of fuel poverty and making a significant contribution to Ireland’s carbon emissions reduction targets and energy efficiency targets for 2020.

The Energy Efficiency Retrofitting Programme is being implemented in a number of phases: Phase 1 commenced in 2013 and is focused on providing attic/roof insulation and the less intrusive cavity wall insulation in all relevant properties while Phase 2 of the Programme, which has been piloted in both Fingal and Westmeath County Councils, will focus on the external fabric upgrade of those social housing units with solid/hollow block wall construction. Funding may also be provided under Phase 2 to upgrade poorly performing windows and doors in specific circumstances.

Funding of some €115.7 million has been provided from 2013 to the end of 2017 to improve energy efficiency and comfort levels in almost 64,000 local authority homes.

The Voids Programme introduced by my Department in 2014, also provides funding for energy efficiency works to local authority housing. During the period 2014 to 2017, works were carried out on 7,433 units under this Programme supported by funding of €34.5m from my Department.

In 2018, funding of €35 million is available for energy efficiency works under both programmes. The main focus of the available funding for the Energy Efficiency Retrofitting Programme will be on the completion of the remaining Phase 1 works and formally rolling out Phase 2. My Department will, shortly, be asking local authorities to submit details of their work proposals and related funding requirements for this Programme in 2018.

House Purchase Schemes
443. Deputy Fiona O’Loughlin asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the options available to support a person buying a second home; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18581/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The Government’s Rebuilding Ireland: Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness is firmly focused on increasing supply and the priority for Government attention is to support those in society with the greatest housing access and affordability challenges. In that context, the focus is on meeting the housing needs of those in the lower income categories, particularly those in need of social housing supports and other households that are most challenged from an affordability perspective, particularly first-time buyers. The significant progress being made in these areas is outlined on the Rebuilding Ireland website at www.rebuildingireland.ie.

In addition, the Government has taken a number of steps to assist homeowners who wish to ‘up-size’ from the starter home they purchased but find themselves in negative equity. In appropriate cases, the Central Bank is allowing banks to provide new mortgages to people to move home, even if the homeowner is currently experiencing negative equity. In addition, housing loans for borrowers in negative equity, who wish to obtain a mortgage for a new property, are not included within the scope of the Loan to Value limits.

State Properties Data

444. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government further to Parliamentary Question No. 1619 of 17 April 2018, the number of the 1,700 ha owned by local authorities that have been used for social or affordable residential units since July 2016; the number of residential units that have been constructed on the land; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18622/18]

445. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the steps that have been taken since July 2016 to facilitate the construction of social or affordable residential units on State-owned land; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18623/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I propose to take Questions Nos. 444 and 445 together.

The development of any residential land in housing authority ownership is in the first instance a matter for the local authority concerned, including its elected members. I want to see local authorities realise new social and affordable homes from their lands without delay, with particular emphasis on prioritising those sites with the greatest potential to deliver housing at scale, in the short to medium term.

The active management of the publicly owned housing land bank is part of a range of complementary actions being progressed under the Rebuilding Ireland: Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness, designed to accelerate and increase housing output. Details of some 1,700 hectares of land in local authority and Housing Agency ownership have been published on the Rebuilding Ireland Housing Land Map as available at


To date, State-led residential construction has been primarily to help meet the needs of households in the lowest income brackets, i.e. for social housing. With increased investment to deliver 50,000 new social homes by 2021, the significant expansion of the social housing
build programme is evident in the Quarter 4 2017 Social Housing Construction Status Report, which was published on 19 April. The programme includes 850 schemes (or phases) at the end of last year, delivering over 13,400 homes, a very substantial increase on the 8,430 homes in the programme a year earlier. At end 2017, 2,512 social housing homes were completed, with another 3,650 under construction and a further 1,912 homes about to go on site, with the remaining 5,300 progressing through the various stages of planning, design and procurement. The full report can be accessed at


The social housing Public Private Partnership (PPP) programme, provides for an investment of €300 million and is expected to deliver 1,500 social housing units in total, via three bundles. The first bundle comprises six PPP sites, delivering over 500 units in the Greater Dublin Area. Two of the sites are located in Dublin City, with one each in South Dublin, Kildare, Wicklow and Louth. The second bundle, comprising eight PPP sites, will deliver over 450 units across the country. Three of the sites are located in County Cork, with one each in the cities of Galway and Waterford, and further sites in Counties Clare, Kildare and Roscommon. Sites for the third bundle are currently being identified and will be announced in the coming months.

Work is ongoing to update the Rebuilding Ireland Housing Land Map to reflect the relevant elements of the Q4 2017 Social Housing Construction Status Report and the PPP Programme and details will be published on the Map, at the link referred to above, once finalised.

I have now advised all local authorities of their minimum Social Housing Targets both for 2018 and also for the multi-annual period to 2021, details of which can be accessed on my Department’s website at:


In relation to the delivery of affordable homes, I am providing funding of €25 million, over 2018 and 2019, to unlock local authority-owned lands specifically for affordable homes to buy or rent. I intend to issue a call for proposals shortly in this regard. Overall, initial estimates suggest that in the region of 3,000 new affordable homes can be made available through a range of schemes and initiatives, with the long-term ambition for some 10,000 additional affordable homes to be provided for sale or rent, as the full range of initiatives are rolled out.

Dublin City Council already has two sites, at O’Devaney Gardens and Oscar Traynor Road, being procured on the basis of a 30% social; 20% affordable purchase and 50% private market housing mix. Dublin City Council is progressing the procurement of these sites as a top priority. In total, the two sites will deliver over 1,200 new build homes. Around 240 will be available for affordable purchase. South Dublin County Council is also progressing one of its major sites, capable of yielding almost 1,000 new homes, at Kilcarberry in Clondalkin, on a 30% social and 70% private mix.

Ministerial Communications

446. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if, following a High Court judgment (details supplied), he will remove his predecessor’s public statement of 24 April 2013 from his Department’s website. [18647/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I
refer to the reply to Question No. 609 of 20 February 2018 which sets out the position in this matter.

**Wastewater Treatment**

447. *Deputy Mattie McGrath* asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if local authorities are obliged to comply with the EPA guidelines for wastewater treatment when purchasing a one-off home in the open countryside for their tenants; if local authorities are obliged to ensure the wastewater treatment system of a one-off home in the open countryside is sufficient for the proposed occupancy of the home; the course of action available if the local authority knowingly breaches the EPA guidelines; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18661/18]

*Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):*

Local authorities have a general responsibility for the monitoring, management and improvement of water quality. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is the statutory body for investigating complaints of pollution and for the enforcement, both directly and through oversight of local authorities, of environmental legislation in Ireland.

The design and installation of wastewater treatment systems for single houses is addressed in the EPA Code of Practice in respect of Wastewater Treatment and Disposal Systems Serving Single Houses (2009). In January 2010, my Department issued comprehensive guidance to all planning authorities regarding the implementation of the EPA’s 2009 Code. The Circular is available to view on my Department’s website. It is Circular Letter PSSP1/10.

Part H (Drainage and Wastewater Disposal) of the Building Regulations and its accompanying Technical Guidance Document H (TGD H 2010) were published in the latter half of 2010 to reflect the relevant parts of the EPA’s Code of Practice. It was amended in 2016 to reference Standard Recommendation 66 which contains the national requirements for products tested to the European standards EN 12566 series and which was developed by the National Standards Authority of Ireland (NSAI) in conjunction with my Department. TGD H 2016 further stipulates that the design and commissioning of wastewater treatment systems should be carried out and/or supervised by a suitably qualified person and that the owner of the building should be provided with sufficient, clear and comprehensive information on any continuing maintenance required to facilitate the effective operation of the system in order to protect human health and the environment.

I consider that the legal requirements of Part H of the Building Regulations as amended in 2016, including the requirement that wastewater treatment systems be designed and commissioned by a suitably qualified person, is sufficient to ensure appropriate protection in this matter.

In addition, under Section 70 of the Water Services Act 2007, as amended, all owners of domestic wastewater treatment systems are required to register their systems with the water services authority in whose functional area the systems are located. The legislation provides that when selling the property, the vendor is required to furnish the purchaser of the property with a Certificate of Registration on completion of the sale. This certificate will confirm that the domestic wastewater treatment system has been registered. The purchaser is obliged under Section 70D(2) to notify the relevant water services authority, on completion of the sale, of the change of ownership so that the water services authority can update its register of domestic waste water treatment systems accordingly.
448. **Deputy Peter Fitzpatrick** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if he will address a matter (details supplied) raised in correspondence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18674/18]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** In June 2016 the Oireachtas voted to suspend domestic water charges. An Expert Commission was established to report on the funding of domestic public water services in Ireland and to provide recommendations on a sustainable long-term funding model for domestic water and wastewater services. This Expert Commission reported in November 2016.

A special Oireachtas committee then examined these recommendations, mainly in public session, and gave its recommendations in April 2017.

The Oireachtas voted in support of the recommendations made by the special Oireachtas Committee, also in April 2017. The overall outcome of this process is that the funding of normal domestic water usage will now be met through central government funding. Domestic users who use excessive amounts of water above an agreed threshold will be charged for the excess amount to ensure that water resources are used efficiently and not wasted.

These provisions have now been legislated for in the Water Services Act 2017, and are reflected in the River Basin Management Plan for Ireland 2018-2021 which I published on 17 April 2018.

A copy of the River Basin Management Plan may be viewed on my Department’s website at the following link


**Planning Issues**

449. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the details of the strategic development zone around lands at Ireland West Airport, Knock; if development is restricted to the aviation industry only; if so, the reason therefor; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18762/18]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** On 30 May 2017, the Government designated 284 hectares lands at Ireland West Airport Knock (IWAK) as a Strategic Development Zone (SDZ) under Section 166 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).

As outlined in the SDZ Designation Order, the Planning and Development Act 2000 (Designation of Strategic Development Zone: Ireland West Airport Knock) Order 2017, developments within the SDZ may include:

(a) commercial activities, including the development of infrastructure to support aviation including air cargo logistics facilities, aircraft hangars, maintenance and repair facilities, and airline and flight services,

(b) the provision of hotel and conference facilities,

(c) the development of any commercial or employment activity that, in the opinion of Mayo
County Council, having regard to the proper planning and sustainable development of its local authority area, requires to be located within the SDZ and cannot be reasonably accommodated at any other location elsewhere in County Mayo, outside of the SDZ, or in the area of any of the other local authorities in the Northern and Western Regional Assembly Area, and

(d) the provision of supporting transport infrastructure.

The Order is available at the following link: http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2017/si/266/made/en/print.

Consideration of the SDZ designation for IWAK was focused on maximising certainty in planning for development related to air services and supporting infrastructure, including development coupled to ancillary economic development opportunities drawn to this location that would not otherwise be drawn to other city/urban locations in the wider Northern and Western Regional Assembly region, such as Galway, Sligo or nearby towns. In this regard, while supporting appropriate economic development related to air services, the SDZ designation must ensure that any further commercial/enterprise uses be focused on those linked to the IWAK access role as an air transportation hub for the region. The designation must also focus economic/employment developments on proposals requiring an airport-related location and which cannot be located elsewhere.

It is understood that the specified development agency, in this case Mayo County Council, has commenced the preparation of a draft planning scheme in respect of the site, which is required to be prepared within two years of the date of the Order.

Fire Service Staff

450. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of retained fire personnel who are due to retire in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18770/18]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** My Department oversees workforce planning for the local government sector, including the monitoring of local government sector employment levels. To this end, my Department gathers quarterly data on staff numbers in local authorities; however, the data gathered does not provide details in terms of the number of retained fire personnel that are due to retire in 2018. Accordingly, the information requested is not available in my Department, but may be obtained directly from the individual local authorities concerned.

Departmental Staff Data

451. **Deputy Darragh O’Brien** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of staff engaged in the co-ordination and monitoring unit to assist local authorities and regional assemblies in the development of the housing needs demand assessment; the anticipated number by the end of 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18791/18]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** The National Planning Framework (NPF), published by Government in February 2018 under Project Ireland 2040, provides for a Housing Need Demand Assessment (HNDGA) to be developed by each local authority, in a co-ordinated fashion, to support the preparation of wider
statutory housing and core strategies as part of the relevant local authority development plans.

The HDNA approach is envisaged as a refinement of the existing processes as set out above and therefore does not require any new co-ordination and monitoring unit as suggested. The HNDA is to be undertaken by local authorities, with coordination through the Regional Assemblies, to ensure an effective response to cross-authority and assembly matters, for example in relation to metropolitan areas where city regions straddle two or more local authority areas. Building on their past experience in developing housing strategies and core strategies, local authorities will develop the new HDNA approach, drawing upon information on demographic, affordability and wider economic trends, coupled to the profile of the existing housing stock and its management.

Recognising the critical role that the local government sector will have in the ongoing implementation of the NPF, including the preparation of the HNDA, my Department has engaged in a series of workshops in recent weeks to ensure that the local authorities are fully informed and prepared in embarking on the HDNA process. I expect that this process will continue in the normal course, supported by the dissemination of any further advice and guidance as required.

**Regional Assemblies**

452. **Deputy Darragh O’Brien** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of support staff directly employed or seconded to each regional assembly in each of the years 2014 to 2017 and to date in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18792/18]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** My Department is responsible for workforce planning for the local government sector, including the monitoring of regional assemblies employment levels. To this end, my Department gathers quarterly data on staff numbers in regional assemblies; however, the data gathered does not provide details in terms of the number of support staff directly employed or seconded to each assembly. Accordingly, the information requested is not available in my Department but may be obtained directly from the regional assemblies.

The total number of staff employed in each regional assembly for the years 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017 is set out below. Figures for the first quarter of 2018 are being collected at present. In 2014 there were two regional assemblies, (1) Border, Midland and Western and (2) Southern and Eastern, which were dissolved and replaced in 2015 by 3 new Regional Assemblies, namely (1) Eastern and Midlands, (2) Northern and Western and (3) Southern.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regional Assembly</th>
<th>Border, Midland and Western</th>
<th>Southern and Eastern</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional Assembly</td>
<td>Eastern and Midlands</td>
<td>Northern and Western</td>
<td>Southern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

High-level staffing numbers for the local authority sector, including regional assemblies, are available on the Public Service Numbers Databank which is hosted and maintained by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and is available at the following link: http://
Fire Stations Provision

453. Deputy Tony McLoughlin asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the status of plans to provide a new fire station to south County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18806/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Damien English): The provision of a fire service in its functional area, including the establishment and maintenance of a fire brigade, the assessment of fire cover needs, and the provision of fire station premises, is a statutory function of individual fire authorities under the Fire Service Act, 1981. My Department supports the fire authorities through setting general policy, providing a central training programme, issuing guidance on operational and other related matters and providing capital funding for priority infrastructural projects.

Donegal County Council, in partnership with my Department, has made substantial progress in modernising fire stations in County Donegal and has replaced 12 of the 15 fire stations following investment of some €11 million by my Department. The following towns in County Donegal are now served by modern fire stations with full facilities: Milford (1998); Buncrana (2000); Letterkenny (HQ) and An Fál Carrach (both in 2003); Carndonagh and Donegal Town (both in 2004); Killybegs (2005); An Clochán Liath, Glenties and Moville (all in 2007); and most recently Gaoth Dobhair and Stranorlar (2009). My Department has channelled significant investment to fire authorities over the last number of years and as a consequence, the high quality of Ireland’s fire service infrastructure is now widely acknowledged.

In February 2016, my Department announced a five-year Fire Services Capital Programme with an allocation of €40 million, based on the current annual €8 million allocation, to be used for the purchase of fire appliances and specialist equipment, building or upgrading of prioritised Fire Stations, an upgrade of the Communications and Mobilisation system and improvements to Training Centres.

The provision of a new fire station in South Donegal has been the subject of discussions for a number of years. While a station is not included in the five year programme referred to above, my Department is liaising with Donegal County Council and has indicated clearly that it will consider a proposal for advancing a fire station project in the south of the county to finalise the fire station programme in Donegal. I understand that the Council is currently undertaking a process to inform a fire station proposal, with a view to its submission to my Department thereafter.

In further considering any proposal, my Department will have regard to established national priorities for funding in this area and the totality of requests from fire authorities countrywide, as well as the value for money offered by the proposal.

Social and Affordable Housing Provision

454. Deputy Michael McGrath asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government his plans to introduce an affordable housing scheme for persons within certain income bands who cannot afford to buy a home privately; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18824/18]
Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):

The delivery of more affordable homes, to buy or rent, is a major priority for Government, focusing in particular on the cities of Dublin, Galway and Cork, where people are facing the greatest affordability challenge. Recognising that people want a choice of affordable purchase and rental, depending on their stage of life and circumstances, we are progressing both.

On 22 January, I announced a package of initiatives to help alleviate affordability pressures faced by households, particularly in those areas of high housing demand and high accommodation costs. The measures announced include the establishment of the Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan, the re-introduction of an affordable purchase scheme, and the introduction of cost rental projects. Further details on the suite of initiatives announced on 22 January can be found at http://rebuildingireland.ie/news/min-murphys-statement-on-affordable-homes/.

The Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan is designed to enable credit-worthy first-time buyers to access sustainable mortgage lending to purchase new or second-hand properties in a suitable price range. The scheme is targeted at first-time buyers who have access to an adequate deposit and have the capacity to repay a mortgage, but who are unable to access a mortgage sufficient for them to purchase their first home. In order to be eligible for the scheme, single applicants must not be earning more than €50,000 per annum and the combined income of joint applicants must not be greater than €75,000 per annum.

In terms of affordable purchase, the new Scheme will be based on the relevant provisions of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009, which will be commenced shortly, and enabling regulations which are in preparation. The income thresholds will be the same as for the home loan and other criteria will be set out in the regulations. The elected members of each local authority will be responsible for determining the order of priority to be accorded to eligible households, in line with the framework of the national scheme.

Dublin City Council already has two sites, at O’Devaney Gardens and Oscar Traynor Road, being procured on the basis of a 30% social, 20% affordable purchase and 50% private market housing mix. Dublin City Council is progressing the procurement of these sites as a top priority. In total, the two sites will deliver over 1,200 new build homes.

In addition, the Government is determined to make cost rental a major part of the Irish housing system, similar to the role it plays in many European countries. Under this approach, rents are set at levels to recover the construction costs and to facilitate the management and administration of developments, but with only a minimal profit margin included. A pilot project is currently being progressed by Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council, at Enniskerry Road, Dundrum, in conjunction with the Housing Agency and Approved Housing Bodies (AHB), using land owned by the Agency. This pilot is providing very valuable learning to inform the wider roll-out. We are now working with the EIB and other stakeholders with a view to announcing the first major cost rental project in Dublin shortly, with a cost rental programme across Dublin and other cities to follow.

Importantly, the new measures announced in January of this year are specifically targeted at delivering more affordable homes from our State land bank in urban areas where affordability issues are greatest, and have the potential to deliver more than 3,000 new affordable homes to buy or rent initially, with a target delivery of at least 10,000 new affordable homes across all initiatives in the longer term.

Recognising that there may be enabling infrastructure requirements on some sites, I am also providing Exchequer funding of €25 million, over 2018 and 2019, as a key contribution towards the delivery of more affordable housing. Applications for this funding will be invited shortly.
455. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the efforts in place by his Department to allocate housing to the 76 housing applicants in Ballyshannon, County Donegal who are on the housing list in the county; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18847/18]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** As Minister, I am primarily responsible for the formulation and implementation of policy and for the preparation of legislation in relation to housing nationally. The day-to-day operation of the social housing system is a matter for the relevant local authority. The allocation of social housing support is a matter for the relevant local authority in accordance with the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009 and associated regulations. Section 22 of the Act requires all housing authorities, as a reserved function, to make an allocation scheme determining the order of priority to be accorded in the allocation of dwellings to households qualified for social housing support and to households approved for a transfer, the allocation of which would, in the opinion of the authority, meet the accommodation needs and requirements of the households.

Under the Housing Acts 1966 to 2009, I, as Minister, have no function in relation to the assessment of individual housing applications and the allocation of accommodation to eligible households, which are matters solely for housing authorities. Section 6 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009 specifically provides that the Minister’s power to issue policy directions and guidelines to housing authorities in relation to their housing functions shall not be construed as enabling him or her to exercise any power or control in relation to any individual case with which a housing authority is or may be concerned. More particularly, section 22(17) of the 2009 Act provides that the Minister’s statutory power to issue directions to a housing authority regarding the operation of its allocation scheme shall not be construed as enabling him or her to direct the allocation of a dwelling to a specific household.

In terms of meeting the need of households on waiting lists across the country, there are a range of social housing supports which qualified households may avail of in order to meet their housing needs. In addition to traditional social housing built and provided directly by local authorities, support is also provided via the private rental sector through the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) and Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS) and through the voluntary sector via approved housing bodies.

Rebuilding Ireland set ambitious targets for social housing delivery. I have made it clear to local authorities that the delivery of social housing supports must be focussed on and consistent with their assessments of housing need, a process which now takes place on an annual basis.

Last year, an additional €500 million was secured during Budget 2018 negotiations, to increase the social housing delivery ambition from 47,000 to 50,000 social housing homes by end 2021. Combined with the target to deliver 88,000 tenancies under the HAP and RAS, this means that our total investment of €6 billion will meet the needs of over 138,000 individuals and families over the lifetime of the Rebuilding Ireland plan.

The implementation of Rebuilding Ireland is well underway and significant progress is being made with just under 45,000 households having had their social housing need met by the end of year 2 of the Plan, some 33% of those targeted. Details of output by local authority and by scheme are available on the statistics page of my Department’s website at the following link:

http://www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/attachments/1a1-sh-overview-ann-final_2018_v3_3.xlsx
Questions - Written Answers

Housing Regeneration

456. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of voids that have been refurbished in Cork city and county in the past year since the end of quarter one 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18861/18]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):**
The Voids Programme, introduced in 2014 by my Department, provides additional support to local authorities in preparing vacant units for re-letting. The purpose of the Voids Programme is to ensure that vacant units are actively targeted, with a view to minimising the turnaround and re-let time of these units and return them to use in an energy efficient condition.

During 2017, my Department provided funding to Cork City Council to enable them to bring 81 vacant properties back to productive use and funding was provided to Cork County Council to enable them to bring 48 such vacant properties back to productive use. Without substantial refurbishment under construction contracts, these social homes would have been left vacant and in turn would not be part of the active social housing stock.

Homeless Persons Data

457. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government further to Parliamentary Question Nos. 604 and 605 of 24 April 2018, the number of exits from homelessness in 2017 to local authority housing, approved housing bodies and the private rental sector by preventative interventions and exits from emergency accommodation for individuals and households, respectively in tabular form. [18866/18]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):**
Details in relation to the exits by individuals and households from homeless emergency accommodation to independent living in 2017 are set out in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Individuals</th>
<th>Households</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local Authority Lettings</td>
<td>1,063</td>
<td>802</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AHB Lettings</td>
<td>856</td>
<td>715</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long Term Supported Ac-</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>commodation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Rented</td>
<td>731</td>
<td>645</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing Assistance Payment (HAP)</td>
<td>1,997</td>
<td>1,741</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>4,729</td>
<td>3,983</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Information on preventative exits is only available for the Dublin region and is presented in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Adults</th>
<th>Households/Tenancies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Homeless HAP</td>
<td>1,364</td>
<td>1,171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other types (not specified by the Council)</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>1,554</td>
<td>1,338</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Seaweed Harvesting Licences
458. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if a decision with regard to the issuing of seaweed harvesting licences has been made by his Department; if a policy on this issue has been agreed; when the applications are likely to be considered; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18874/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Damien English):** Applications to harvest seaweed, most of which are by companies, are effectively on hold until such time as I am in a position to bring clarity to the regulatory regime applying to the harvesting of wild seaweed. This includes the interaction between the applications on hand from companies and any seaweed related rights that exist. At that point the applications on hand will come before me for determination. Work on this complex legal issue is continuing and I hope to have made substantial progress on the matter later in the second quarter of this year.

**Housing Provision**

459. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government his plans for families that entered into the affordable housing scheme and now need to move due to geographical or family size need in circumstances in which they are not in a position to increase their mortgage and the clawback is still owing to the council in view of the fact that there is no follow-on to the scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18919/18]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** Homes sold to first-time buyers under previous affordable housing schemes, at a significant discount from market value, contained a clawback provision, in order to prevent short-term profit-taking on the resale of the discounted house, to the detriment of the schemes’ objectives.

Under the clawback provisions, as set out in the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, and the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2002, as amended, where the purchaser proposes to sell the unit within 20 years of the date of purchase, he/she must refund to the local authority a percentage of the proceeds of the sale of the unit. The percentage of the proceeds to be repaid will be related to the proportion of discount from the market value originally received from the local authority. A full refund must be paid if the unit is sold within the first ten years of occupancy. A reduction of 10% per annum is given for each full year of occupancy between 10 and 20 years and after 20 years of full occupancy, no refund would be due to the local authority.

However, where a person is selling an affordable home and the clawback amount payable would reduce the proceeds of resale below the initial price actually paid, the legislation provides for the amount of the clawback payable to be reduced to the extent necessary to avoid that result.

In terms of new affordability initiatives, the Government is committed to ensuring that housing is affordable to buy or rent for households on low to moderate incomes. With regard to affordable purchase, I intend to establish a new scheme, to be based on the relevant provisions of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009, which will be commenced shortly, and enabling regulations which are in preparation. In this regard, the inclusion of households as “eligible” for the purpose of the new scheme, including those that have purchased under previous affordable housing schemes, but whose current accommodation needs require the household to relocate to a different dwelling, are under active consideration.
460. **Deputy Jonathan O’Bien** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of private rented properties by county; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18978/18]

461. **Deputy Jonathan O’Bien** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of private rented properties that comply with Part M regulations by county; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18979/18]

462. **Deputy Jonathan O’Bien** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the percentage of private rented properties suitable for occupancy by persons in wheelchairs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18980/18]

463. **Deputy Jonathan O’Bien** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of private rented properties that are pre and post 1 June 1992, respectively; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18981/18]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 460 to 463, inclusive, together.

My Department does not hold or collate the data referred to by the Deputy in relation to private rental properties.

The Clerk of the Dáil requested that arrangements be put in place to facilitate the provision of information by State Bodies to members of the Oireachtas. Following the issue of Circular LG (P)05/16 on 20 September 2016 from my Department, the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB) set up a dedicated email address for this purpose, at OireachtasMembersQueries@rtb.ie.

Part M of the Building Regulations does not differentiate between owner occupied and rental properties, but applies equally to all dwellings, including social housing. New buildings and extensions or material alterations to existing buildings must comply with the legal minimum performance standards set out in the Building Regulations 1997 - 2017. In this context, the Building Regulations (Part M Amendment) Regulations 2010, and the accompanying Technical Guidance Document M – Access and Use (2010), which came into effect on 1 January 2012, set out the minimum statutory requirements that a building must achieve in respect of access. The TGDs are available on my Department’s website at


The requirements of Part M aim to ensure that, regardless of age, size or disability:

- new buildings other than dwellings are accessible and usable;

- extensions to existing buildings other than dwellings are, where practicable, accessible and usable;

- material alterations to existing buildings other than dwellings increase the accessibility and usability of existing buildings, where practicable;

- certain changes of use to existing buildings other than dwellings increase the accessibility and usability of existing buildings where practicable; and

- new dwellings are visitable.
Guidance on how to design, build and manage buildings and spaces so that they can be readily accessed and used by everyone, regardless of age, size, ability or disability is available in Building for Everyone, A Universal Design Approach, a National Disability Authority (NDA) publication, which may be accessed at www.nda.ie.

Housing Loans

464. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government his plans to allow county council mortgage holders who are first-time buyers and in the early stages of their mortgage to avail of the same rates as the first time buyers on the Rebuilding Ireland home loan scheme. [18986/18]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** Following a review of the two existing local authority home loan schemes, the House Purchase Loan and the Home Choice Loan, a new loan offering known as the Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan was introduced, with effect from 1 February 2018. The new loan enables credit-worthy first-time buyers to access sustainable mortgage lending to purchase new or second-hand properties in a suitable price range. The low rate of fixed interest associated with the Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan provides first-time buyers with access to mortgage finance that they may not have otherwise been able to afford at a higher interest rate.

As with previous local authority house purchase loan finance, the Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan is available to first-time buyers only. This is to ensure the effective targeting of limited resources and there is no change in this regard.

The low interest rates for the Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan have been secured through the raising of €200 million by the Housing Finance Agency (HFA) on a fixed-rate basis for periods out to thirty years’ maturity. Based on the pricing achieved, local authorities can offer a first tranche of fixed-rate annuity finance to eligible borrowers at rates of 2.0% and 2.25% per annum, for terms of up to 25 and 30 years respectively, up to an aggregate maximum of €200 million.

As such, these conditions are solely available to new applicants under the specific terms and conditions of the Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan. Existing local authority mortgage holders remain subject to the terms and conditions of their loans as originally agreed at the point of drawdown of their individual loans.

Social and Affordable Housing Data

465. **Deputy Darragh O’Brien** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of social housing units delivered in each of the years 2015 to 2017, by local authority; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18987/18]

466. **Deputy Darragh O’Brien** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of social housing units delivered in each of the years 2015 to 2017, by county; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18988/18]

467. **Deputy Darragh O’Brien** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of social housing units planned for delivery in 2018, by local authority and county; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18989/18]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):**
The Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government proposes to take Questions Nos. 465 to 467, inclusive, together.

Detailed data in relation to social housing delivery by each local authority, for the years 2015 to 2017, is available on my Department’s website at the following link:


In 2018, more than 25,000 additional households will have their housing need met, including through the Housing Assistance Payment Scheme and the Rental Accommodation Scheme. In this regard, I recently wrote to all local authorities setting out their individual social housing targets across build, acquisition and leasing for 2018 and also for 2018-2021. Details of these are available on the Rebuilding Ireland website at the following link:


Rebuilding Ireland, together with initiatives announced on foot of the targeted review of progress which was undertaken last year, as well as additional measures announced under Budget 2018, provides a robust framework for addressing the housing and homelessness challenges we face. My Department’s focus, and that of all delivery agents, will remain on implementation and delivery to ensure that the range of objectives and targets set are achieved. A wide range of delivery mechanisms and a funding commitment of €6 billion over the lifetime of Rebuilding Ireland have been put in place to support the achievement of these targets.

In terms of setting and publishing targets for 2018 and 2018-2021, I want to drive transparency and also accountability at local authority level. Rebuilding Ireland is modelled on blended delivery across the main programmes of build, acquisition and leasing. While it is recognised that the pace of delivery, particularly under build activity, may vary from local authority to local authority, the range of delivery options available, combined with the support structures outlined, provide the necessary resources for local authorities and I expect all stakeholders to be fully mobilised towards meeting the target for 2018, and subsequent years.

In respect of build targets for 2018, a strong pipeline is already in place for local authorities and Approved Housing Bodies to deliver on these targets. The 2018 build target is for the delivery of 4,969 additional social housing homes, including 3,819 local authority and Approved Housing Body build units. The Quarter 4 2017 Construction Status Report, available on the Rebuilding Ireland website at the link below, provides project detail on the existing pipeline in place, which will support the delivery against this target. The report is based on activity up to end 2017 and, over the course of the first quarter of 2018, further projects will have been moving through from approval to on-site, with additional projects also being added to the pipeline. These will be reflected in the next quarterly report.


My Department will continue to work with local authorities to maximise delivery and also harness appropriate opportunities to deliver on additional build units in 2018, including through turnkey schemes.

Planning Issues

468. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government his plans to change planning legislation with respect to unauthorised developments; if
so, if such changes will impact on situations in which a local authority has deemed a development to be unauthorised and has issued a warning letter or enforcement or both and in which an application for planning permission or an appeal to An Bord Pleanála halts the process; if not, the reason therefore; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18991/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Under the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, all development, unless specifically exempted under the Act or the associated Regulations, requires planning permission.

Any development that is carried out without planning permission or that does not comply with the terms of a planning permission is unauthorised development and may be subject to enforcement action by a planning authority. Responsibility for enforcement action in relation to any breach of the planning code is a matter for individual planning authorities and extensive enforcement provisions are provided for in Part VIII of the Act.

Where a development has been carried out without firstly obtaining the necessary planning permission, a person may apply to their planning authority for retention permission in accordance with section 34(12) of the Act. An application for retention permission is required to be assessed by a planning authority in the same way as any other application; that is, the planning authority is required to consider the proper planning and sustainable development of the area, having regard to the provisions of the development plan, any submissions or observations received, and relevant Ministerial or Government policies, including any guidelines issued by my Department.

It should be noted that the fact that a person has made an application for retention permission is not a defence to a prosecution for unauthorised development and a development carried out without planning permission, or in breach of planning conditions, remains unauthorised unless and until retention permission is granted. Section 162(3) of the Act provides that no enforcement action under the Part VIII enforcement provisions of the Act shall be stayed or withdrawn by reason of an application for retention of unauthorised development.

I have no plans to amend the provisions in this regard at this time.

Approved Housing Bodies

469. Deputy Catherine Murphy asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government further to Parliamentary Question No. 646 of 8 March 2018, the position regarding the matter. [19026/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Having compiled the data requested, I replied to the Deputy’s Parliamentary Question of 8 March 2018 in accordance with standard procedures on 29 March 2018.

Electoral Register

470. Deputy Róisín Shortall asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if his attention has been drawn to the new format of the electoral register as produced by Dublin City Council, Fingal County Council and Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council; his views on whether it is not user friendly, uses double the number of pages to previous years’ registers and is particularly confusing for election staff in which a Dáil Éireann constituency straddles two local authorities which use two different formats; and if he will make a statement
Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy John Paul Phelan): I refer to the reply to Question No. 332 of 21 March 2018 which sets out the position in this matter.

Rental Sector Strategy

471. Deputy Eoin Ó Broin asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the position regarding plans to regulate the short-term lettings sector; and when same will be published. [19124/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Under Action 18 of the Strategy for the Rental Sector, my Department established a Working Group, involving representatives of all major public stakeholders with a policy interest in short-term lettings, to develop guidance in relation to planning applications, changes of use relating to short-term lettings and to examine the need for new regulatory arrangements.

The proposals under consideration by the Working Group, which has met on six occasions to date, have been aimed at facilitating short-term letting of accommodation within permanent residences, known as home-sharing, while protecting existing stock of residential property in areas of high demand, safeguarding neighbourhood amenity and consumer protection, and generating revenue to address any negative externalities of short-term letting.

The Working Group completed guidance for local authorities on planning applications relating to short-term lettings and my Department issued a circular on the matter last October.

The Group has since been focused on developing proposals for an appropriate comprehensive regulatory approach for short-term tourism-related lettings as well as identifying amendments to relevant legislation that may be necessary to give effect to such a regulatory regime.

The report of the Working Group has now been submitted to my Department and I will complete my consideration of it, including the need for a targeted public consultation, without delay.

Water Abstraction Regulation

472. Deputy Eoin Ó Broin asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government when the water abstraction legislation as required by the water framework directive will be published. [19125/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The Water Framework Directive requires that abstractions of surface water or ground water which are likely to have a significant effect on water status must be regulated. In December 2017, the Government approved the commencement of work on a General Scheme of a Water Environment (Abstractions) Bill which will govern the abstraction of water in a proportionate and efficient way.

The Minister intends to return to Government in the coming weeks with a Draft General Scheme of this Bill. A public consultation process will then be launched, and the outcome of that consultation will inform the further development of the Bill.
**Arts Funding**

473. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the funding provided to a centre (details supplied) for each of the past four years; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18627/18]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** My Department has provided funding directly to the centre referred to in the question for the presentation of Irish artists as part of its annual cultural programme over 2015 - 2018 as follows:

- 2015 - €7,765
- 2016 - €8,308
- 2017 - €27,000
- 2018 - €50,000

**Arts Centres**

474. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the budget line and estimate under which the latest tranche of funding for a centre (details supplied) arose. [19024/18]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** The Government is very supportive of the redevelopment of the centre referred to in the question. It will provide a sustainable and modern flagship venue aimed at promoting Irish culture in a key global city, engaging our large diaspora in America and in turn further deepening the strong bilateral relationship with the US, which are key strategic priorities for Ireland.

The most recent capital grant support for the centre which totalled €2.128m was announced by the Taoiseach in March 2018. €1m of this award came from the subhead A15 of the Vote of the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and €1.128m was awarded by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

The Government looks forward to the completion of the centre and to deepening the relationship with the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht through the ongoing partnership with Culture Ireland, which has supported the centre’s annual programme of Irish arts. Culture Ireland funding for the presentation of Irish artists in the centre’s programme in 2018 is €220,000.

**Film Industry**

475. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht when she will publish the economic analysis of the Irish film, television and animation sector carried out by companies (details supplied) that was commissioned in 2016; the reason for the delay in publishing this study; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18553/18]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** I propose to publish this report within the coming weeks.
Questions - Written Answers

Turf Cutting Compensation Scheme Applications

476. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht when a decision on a site visit regarding a cessation of turf cutting compensation scheme application by a person (details supplied) will be finalised; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [18604/18]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** An application for compensation under the cessation of turf cutting compensation scheme has been received by my Department from the individual referred to in the Deputy’s Question. With respect to 36 raised bog natural heritage area sites, the qualifying criteria for the scheme are that:

- The applicant must have had a legal interest (ownership or a turbary right (right to cut turf)) in one of these sites on 25 May 2010 and must have had the right to cut and remove turf from the property on that date;

- The applicant must have been cutting turf on the land in question during the relevant five year period up to 14 January 2014;

- The turf resource on the site has not been exhausted; and

- No turf cutting or associated activity is ongoing on the property.

My Department is examining the application in view of the qualifying criteria for the scheme.

I am advised that an inspection of the plot of bog in respect of which the applicant has applied for compensation is scheduled to be undertaken shortly. My Department will be in a position to further process the application when this inspection has been completed.

Scéim na gCúntóirí Teanga

477. D’fhiafraigh **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** den Aire Cultúir, Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta cathain a fhoilseofar an t-athbhreithniú ar scéim na gcúntóirí teanga. [18688/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Joe McHugh):** Tá tús curtha anois ag an Roinn leis an athbhreithniú ar Scéim na gCúntóirí Teanga i gcomhar le Lárionad Taighde agus Foghlama Ollscoil Chathair Bhaile Átha Cliath.

Foilseofar an tathbhreithniú in am tráth na gceithre a chuireann as a chur i bhfeidhm do scoilbhliain 2018/19.

Commemorative Events

478. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht when the next meeting of the all-party consultation group on commemorations will meet in view of the fact that the group has not met for over a year. [18825/18]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** In the lead up to the State’s commemoration of the centenary of the events of 1916, the All-Party Consultative Group on Commemorations proved very constructive. In the upcoming years to 2023, and the various historical events falling to be remembered, such input will again be beneficial in informing the State Commemorative Programme for the remainder of the Decade.
of Centenaries.

Last September, my predecessor Minister Humphreys, wrote to the Ceann Comhairle requesting the Business Committee to nominate Deputies and Senators to the group.

Parties in the Northern Ireland Assembly that are not represented in the Dáil or Seanad were also requested to make nominations.

Some nominations from the Dáil, Seanad and Northern Ireland Assembly remain outstanding, but I expect most of these to be finalised shortly. I will then be in a position to convene an early meeting of the Group.

Architectural Heritage

479. Deputy Peadar Tóibín asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if she will address a matter (details supplied) regarding national monument legislation. [19032/18]

  Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): I refer the Deputy to my reply to Question No. 10092/18 on 28 February 2018. I would again encourage the Deputy to continue to engage with this process which I believe is best placed to deliver a satisfactory outcome for all stakeholders.

National Museum

480. Deputy Peadar Tóibín asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the number of vacancies on the board of the National Museum of Ireland; and the persons who left the board in each of the past five years. [19034/18]

  Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): Section 19(1) of the National Cultural Institutions Act, 1997 (the 1997 Act) provides that the Board of the National Museum of Ireland shall consist of a chairperson and not less than 13 or more than 15 ordinary members.

  In 2013 and 2014 there was one vacancy on the Board of the Museum. In 2015, the terms of office of 8 Board members expired and a further 7 expired in 2016.

  In July 2016 my predecessor appointed a new Board, comprising 16 members including the Chair, to the National Museum of Ireland.

  Since July 2016 three vacancies have arisen on the Board of the National Museum of Ireland two of which occurred in 2017 and one in 2018.

  Officials in my Department are working with the National Museum of Ireland to fill these vacancies which includes the preparation of the appropriate call for expressions of interest to serve on the Board which will be advertised on www.StateBoards.ie.

  The procedure for the filling of the staff representative vacancy is set out in the 1997 Act.

National Museum

481. Deputy Peadar Tóibín asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht
when the 2016 accounts of the National Museum of Ireland will be laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas. [19035/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): The National Museum of Ireland’s Financial Statements for the year ended 31st December 2016 were laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas on 19 April 2018.