

Written Answers.

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

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

Questions Nos. 7 to 27, inclusive, resubmitted.

Questions Nos. 28 to 36, inclusive, answered orally.

Court Accommodation Refurbishment

37. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the position regarding the ongoing construction work on the upgrade of Mullingar courthouse; when it will be completed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22541/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Deputy will be aware that, under the provisions of the Courts Service Act 1998, management of the courts, including the provision of accommodation for court sittings, is the responsibility of the Courts Service, which is independent in exercising its functions.

In 2012, the construction or extension/refurbishment of seven courthouses under the Courts Public Private Partnership Bundle (PPP) was included as part of the €2.25 billion Government's Infrastructure Stimulus programme. I am delighted to inform the Deputy that a significant upgrade and refurbishment of Mullingar Courthouse is currently nearing completion.

The extended and refurbished Mullingar Courthouse will provide three modern courtrooms enabling Circuit and District Court sittings in civil, criminal and family law cases, improved custody facilities, court offices and associated facilities and will provide much improved facilities for all court users in Mullingar and it will also result in the restoration of an important heritage building for Mullingar. The estimated cost of the capital development project of the Mullingar Courthouse is €14.1 million.

The Courts Service has advised that the works at Mullingar Courthouse are now in their final stages and are expected to be substantially completed in the coming weeks after which the building will be commissioned and certified for hand over to the Courts Service. Following hand over, the Courts Service office will move back into the courthouse from its current location on Church Avenue with a view to court sittings resuming in the refurbished building in the Autumn.

In terms of scale, the Courts Public Private Partnership Bundle project is the largest capital building project ever undertaken by the Courts Service, delivering a total of 31 courtrooms and 36,000 m² of accommodation nationwide. New or refurbished courthouses have already been completed at six locations in various parts of the country – in Drogheda, Letterkenny, Wexford,

Limerick, Waterford and Cork. The total capital cost of the Courts PPP Bundle is approximately €149.9 million.

The Government has already invested over €523 million in the Courts infrastructure between 2003 and 2016 and a number of further developments in relation to the Courts Service accommodation requirements are outlined in the Government's recent National Development Plan 2018 -2027. The completion of the newly refurbished and upgraded Mullingar Court-house is a further example of the Government's commitment to improve access to justice for our citizens.

Question No. 38 answered orally.

Coroners Service

39. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will direct the Law Reform Commission to undertake a review of the coroner court system, including a re-examination of the way in which it operates, its operational procedures, the roles involved, the outcome of the jury in the court process and the changes which need to be made (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22379/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The tragic incident concerned took place on 1 July, 2012 and I want to express my sympathies to the family of the deceased person.

I understand that the then coroner for Kerry South and East opened an inquest on 24 September 2012, and adjourned it, as he was obliged to do, on foot of a request from An Garda Síochána under Section 25 of the Coroners Act, 1962. I am informed, however, that a death certificate in respect of the deceased was issued promptly in 2012 by the Civil Registrar on foot of notification by the coroner that an inquest had been opened and adjourned.

The death in this case resulted from a hit and run event and the driver fled the jurisdiction immediately afterwards. This led to a lengthy and complex investigation by the Gardaí. The driver was eventually detained in the UK and returned to Ireland in 2014. A successful criminal prosecution against him concluded in April 2015.

In addition, however, following the conclusion of that case, the Gardaí took a criminal prosecution against another person in relation to the incident which concluded in late June 2017. I understand that there were also civil proceedings which concluded in January 2018.

I am informed that the current coroner for Kerry South and East received confirmation from the Gardaí in January 2018 that the inquest could proceed and she made arrangements for the inquest which was completed in early May 2018. The inquest returned a verdict of accidental death in respect of the deceased person. As the Deputy will be aware, an inquest is not permitted to return a verdict that apportions blame or exoneration to a person. That is a matter entirely for the courts established under the Constitution.

As you will appreciate, I can make no particular comment on the outcome of the criminal cases concerned. Nor do I, as Minister, have a role in the conduct of an inquest by a coroner or of a criminal investigation by An Garda Síochána. I understand that the deceased's family praised the painstaking work of the Gardaí in their investigation into the death.

I have every sympathy for the family in this case, who had to deal with a long delay between the death of their loved one and the completion of the inquest. The particular circumstances of

the case are such that I do not believe they justify a review of the coronial system as a whole and I therefore have no plans to make a request to the Law Reform Commission as suggested by the Deputy.

Employment Rights

40. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will consider re-evaluating the restrictions in place on the right to work of asylum seekers with regard to specific occupations in view of a Supreme Court decision; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22698/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Government responded to the Supreme Court judgment by deciding to opt in to the EU (recast) Reception Conditions Directive which will result in a wide range of reforms in the protection system. This opt-in will allow for an effective labour market access for protection applicants who have not received a first instance decision over a designated period of time. I am confident that this decision to opt into the Directive is a very positive development for the entire protection system and for applicants and their families while they await a final decision on their application. In addition to labour market access, the Directive also includes important provisions in relation to children's rights, health, education and material reception conditions for applicants, which includes housing, food, clothing and a daily expenses allowance.

The Government initiated the opt-in process with the EU Commission which is on target to be completed in June. Because this process takes some time, interim measures needed to be put in place. Accordingly, Government decided that international protection applicants, as a category of non-EEA nationals, should come under the terms of the Employment Permits Act 2003 (as amended) which is the existing law governing the employment of all third country nationals. Under that Act, persons can apply for an employment permit in certain sectors defined by the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation. In addition, I utilised my own powers to introduce a complementary self-employment scheme for eligible applicants (those in the system for over nine months without a first instance recommendation) – Ireland is one of very few European countries allowing such access. This also ensured that a structure was available to vindicate the applicants' right to labour market access on the day the prohibition was struck down. The total number of Self Employment applications received to date is 629, of which 430 have been granted.

I would stress that this interim scheme will be of very short duration until the opt-in process into the EU Directive is completed. The process of compliance is on course to be completed within the planned timeframe. Once this happens, access to the labour market will be underpinned by EU law and I will have the opportunity as Minister for Justice and Equality to bring to Government a new scheme granting effective access to the labour market for qualified applicants. I expect that this permanent scheme will provide for a broader access to the labour market than the current work permits regime allows for all third country national migrants. The details of this new scheme are well advanced and will be announced and commenced in the coming weeks in line with the commitments made previously.

I am confident that this progressive approach by Government, which for the first time will see additional elements of our protection process subject to EU law and verification by the EU Commission, will be a further major effective and reforming step as we seek to improve the standards of our reception conditions and efficient determination of protection applications.

Garda Deployment

41. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of gardaí attached to core Garda units in Cork city Garda division compared to 2010; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22687/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I should say at the outset that the distribution of Garda personnel is exclusively the statutory responsibility of the Garda Commissioner

I am informed by the Commissioner that in order to deliver an effective policing service, it is essential that Garda management have the flexibility to deploy Garda resources to meet operational policing needs and address critical issues as they arise. For this reason, it is a matter for the Divisional Chief Superintendent to determine the optimum distribution of duties among the personnel available to him or her having regard to the profile of the area and its specific needs at any given time. The material requested by the Deputy is, therefore, not available in the manner requested.

By way of assistance to the Deputy, I am further informed by the Commissioner that the strength of the Cork City Division in 2010 and on 30 April 2018, the latest date for which information is currently available, was 698 and 682 respectively. There are also 42 Garda Reserves and 72 Garda civilian staff attached to the Cork City 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.

I can assure the House that the Government is committed to ensuring a strong and visible police presence throughout the country in order to maintain and strengthen community engagement, provide reassurance to citizens and to deter crime. To make this a reality for all, the Government has in place a plan for an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 personnel by 2021, including 15,000 Garda members.

Real, tangible progress has been made towards this goal. Garda numbers, taking account of projected retirements, increased to 13,551 at the end of 2017 - a net increase of over 600 since the end of 2016.

The Deputy will be aware that in 2010 a previous Government closed the Garda College and imposed a moratorium - the measures imposed at that time had a negative impact on Garda numbers across all Divisions and the legacy of these decisions continues to have consequences for policing. When it had brought about an early exit from the bailout and stabilized the public finances, in September 2014 the then Government reopened the College and since then just under 1,800 recruits have attested as members of An Garda Síochána and are performing mainstream duties nationwide, 48 of whom have been assigned to the Cork City Division.

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 in March. Further, Garda numbers, taking account of projected retirements, are on track to reach 14,000 by the end of this year.

Taking account of projected retirements, reaching a strength of 15,000 by 2021 will require some 1,600 more Garda members to be recruited on a phased basis over the next two years. This is an ambitious programme of accelerated recruitment. To ensure a continuous pipeline of

candidates a new recruitment drive was launched by the Commissioner last week with a closing date of 6 June. The competition is being undertaken by the Public Appointment Service on behalf of the Commissioner and applications should be made to www.publicjobs.ie.

In addition to the investment in more Gardaí, 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. We are now rebuilding the organisation and providing the Commissioner with the resources needed to deploy increasing numbers of Gardaí. Undoubtedly, the ongoing recruitment process will support all Garda activities and enhance visibility within our communities and will enable the Commissioner to provide additional resources across every Garda Division, including the Cork City Division, as new Garda recruits continue to come on stream.

Garda Reports

42. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the way in which he plans to respond to the recommendation in the recent Garda culture audit (details supplied) that more members be appointed to the rank of sergeant to deal with the perceived supervision vacuum; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22647/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I welcome the recent publication of the independent organisational culture audit commissioned by An Garda Síochána and conducted by PwC. I am sure the Deputy will agree that the conduct of such an audit, the first of its kind undertaken by An Garda Síochána, is of major significance in the context of the reform programme underway. Reform of culture is generally recognised as one of, if not the, critical component in the transformation of any organisation, albeit one of the most difficult to achieve and sustain.

I have discussed the report with the Commissioner and fully endorse his view that the report provides a valuable resource for the organisation and I share his view that it is of critical importance in informing the organisation’s provision of the best supports to its people, which will in turn transform the service provided to the public.

It is encouraging that there was a strong response rate to the audit within An Garda Síochána with over 6,500 personnel – members, reserves and civilians – participating through a mix of methods including a survey, focus groups and interviews. Based on this high level of participation, the report can be regarded as establishing a very strong and representative view of the organisation’s culture.

I welcome the positives in the report including, in particular, the pride in the central role An Garda Síochána plays in protecting and supporting communities, the value personnel place on using police powers appropriately and acting with integrity and honesty; the esprit de corps, and the “can do” attitude. It is important that these positives are recognised and that they are not taken for granted.

It is important to realise that these positive attributes can also become negatives if taken to extremes and, of course, the report also highlights key areas for improvement including in relation to how the leadership is perceived, how personnel are held to account, how those who speak up are treated, what is termed the “supervision vacuum” and the view, whether real or perceived, that the promotion process for the supervisory ranks is not merit-based.

These are important issues that need to be considered in depth. I am informed by the Commissioner that An Garda Síochána is considering the report in order to formulate a considered and effective response to its insights and recommendations. I understand that the senior leadership team has already met collectively to discuss the report with a view to specific actions being developed before the Autumn.

My Department has, of course, a contribution to make in relation to a number of the areas identified as needing improvement including the areas of supervision and the perceived or real view that promotions at the level of sergeant and inspector are influenced by favouritism and nepotism.

In relation to supervision it is critical that new Gardaí have adequate supervision and support to carry out their duties in a manner that reflects the Code of Ethics that is now in place to guide the actions of all personnel. I know that the Commissioner is fully seized of the importance of this.

A number of competitions are currently in train to fill existing vacancies in the key supervisory ranks of Sergeant and Inspector with the aim of bringing the strength of these ranks to 2,000 and 300 respectively as agreed under the Employment Control Framework.

It is not just about filling existing vacancies. It is also about ensuring that Gardaí are doing the job that they are trained to do. As part of the civilianisation process underway, close to 80 Gardaí have been redeployed including seven sergeants and six inspectors. I have made it clear to the Commissioner that I expect this to accelerate significantly this year. To that end I welcome the fact that the Commissioner has directed that the redeployment of sergeants from administrative duties to frontline supervisory duties be prioritised in the short term to address any supervisory gaps.

The Deputy will be aware that the Government has agreed an overall vision for the Garda workforce of 21,000 by 2021 including 15,000 Gardaí. The Government is committed to ensuring that, as the number of Gardaí increases towards 15,000, the sergeant and inspector ranks expand commensurately.

In relation to promotion processes for the supervisory ranks it is important to note that the selection boards have a majority of external lay members appointed by the Policing Authority under the relevant Regulations. It is also important to say that the Commission on Public Service Appointments in its 2015 audit of the promotion process concluded that it was broadly satisfied that the processes incorporate adequate safeguards that protect the integrity of the selection processes and offers the necessary assurance that candidates are appointed on the basis of their interview performance. That said, it is clear that there is scope for the modernisation of the processes and I welcome the conclusion of the independent review commissioned by An Garda Síochána. The outcome of the review is under consideration by my Department with a view to an updated regulatory framework being developed and put in place for future competitions.

The report of the culture audit also raises issues that touch on resources more broadly. These matters will be examined in the context of the upcoming estimates process for 2019.

Direct Provision System

43. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his views on whether the system of direct provision here is in compliance with the European Convention on Human Rights and the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22700/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): Direct Provision is the term used to describe the on arrival support system in Ireland whereby State services including accommodation, food, health and education are directly provided to international protection applicants through the relevant Government Department or Agency. It is a whole of government support system for those seeking international protection in Ireland, although the term tends to be used to describe Accommodation Centres that make up only a part of the overall system.

I appreciate the criticisms levelled at the system, which mainly relate to length of stay, but I do consider the system is relatively effective in meeting its primary objective of ensuring that those who come to our country seeking international protection have their rights vindicated and receive immediate food and shelter and have immediate access to our state services. It remains a fact that we do not know how many people will arrive on our shores seeking international protection on any given day but, because of the Direct Provision system, we know for certain that all applicants, are offered immediate shelter, full board accommodation and a range of services, such as healthcare and education while their applications for international protection are being processed. This fully meets our obligations under the Convention and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

A number of improvements have been achieved in implementing the recommendations of the McMahon Report and the Government has looked to further consolidate those improvements and build upon them. For example, a major reform of the system is underway to provide independent living arrangements for those who wish to avail of them. A total of 1714 applicants now have these facilities available to them and this is expected to increase to 1880 in the months ahead. In addition, International Protection Applicants now have full access to the services of the Ombudsman and Ombudsman for Children to follow up on any issues of concern.

The system will be reformed further arising from the decision to opt into the (recast) EU Reception Conditions Directive. The requirement to ensure the system complies with EU norms is another welcome advancement, which I intend will be concluded by June of this year. These requirements will be subject to EU oversight and place our services on a common European standard.

I can assure the Deputy that the Government is absolutely committed to ensuring that the Direct Provision system or any other aspect of our asylum system meets international standards. I personally want to ensure that our system in Ireland reaches or indeed exceeds international standards and I am confident that the external oversight which we have opted into, arising from our participation in the EU Directive, will assure that our conditions continue to improve.

Garda Resources

44. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the capital investment being made in Garda resources in counties Cavan and Monaghan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22399/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Deputy will appreciate that it is the Garda Commissioner who is responsible for managing and controlling generally the administration and business of An Garda Síochána. As Minister, I have no direct role in these matters.

However I have been informed by the Garda authorities that Garda management keeps the distribution of resources under continual review 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.

Furthermore when allocations are taking place, comprehensive consultation is carried out with local management. Where a deficiency in resources is identified the matter is considered fully and addressed accordingly.

There has been very significant investment in Garda resources across the State in recent years and some relevant details for counties Cavan and Monaghan are as follows.

Buildings and accommodation

The programme of replacement and refurbishment of Garda accommodation is progressed by the Garda authorities working in close cooperation with the Office of Public Works (OPW), which has the responsibility for the provision and maintenance of Garda accommodation.

I am informed by the Garda authorities that during the period since March 2016, minor maintenance and refurbishment works were approved in the Cavan/Monaghan Division in the following Garda stations: Bailieboro, Ballyconnell, Blacklion, Carrickmacross, Castleblayney, Cavan, Emyvale, Kingscourt, Monaghan, and Rockcorry.

Under the Garda Building and Refurbishment Programme 2016-2021, a new Garda station in Bailieborough will be constructed. I understand that the OPW is now finalising planning documentation in relation to a site acquired and a Part 9 Planning application is expected to be lodged in the next number of weeks. Until planning, the required public procurement process and contract award are completed, it is not possible to give a definitive date for completion of the construction of the new station.

In advance of the development of a new station for Bailieborough, essential remediation works at the existing Garda station were also completed in 2016. These works involved enhancements to the public office and safety improvements throughout the building.

The OPW advises that it is planning to replace the windows in Monaghan Garda Station later this year under its planned Fabric Upgrade Programme.

Separate to the above Programmes, I am informed that An Garda Síochána seeks to address maintenance issues, including any refurbishment works, as they arise liaising closely with the OPW in this regard. The progression of any scheme of works is subject to the funding available and the competing accommodation priorities within An Garda Síochána.

In addition, the Deputy will be aware that the Programme for a Partnership Government commits to a pilot scheme to reopen 6 Garda stations, both urban and rural, to determine possible positive impacts that such openings will have on criminal activity, with special emphasis on burglaries, theft and public order.

The Garda Commissioner's final report in that regard recommends that Bawnboy Garda Station in Co. Cavan be included in the pilot and the OPW and Garda Commissioner are engaging in relation to the works and estimated cost involved.

Garda Fleet

As the Deputy will appreciate, decisions in relation to the provision and allocation of Garda vehicles are a matter for the Garda Commissioner in the light of his identified operational demands and the availability of resources. As Minister, I have no direct role in the matter.

The Government's Capital Plan 2016 – 2021 provides €46 million for investment in the

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Garda fleet, to ensure that An Garda Síochána has a modern, effective and fit-for-purpose fleet and this is in addition to the investment of almost €30 million in the period 2013 to 2015. In total, in the period 2013 to 2017, almost €44 million has been invested in the fleet.

I am advised that the strength of the Garda Fleet in the Cavan/Monaghan Division as at 31 March 2018 is 59 vehicles.

Provision has been made to purchase an additional 25 vehicles for the Northern Region in 2018. The exact allocation of these vehicles will be determined by Assistant Commissioner for the Northern Region in accordance with operational policing priorities following delivery of these vehicles.

I understand that the allocation of Garda vehicles is monitored and reviewed by the Garda authorities on a continual basis. The responsibility for the efficient deployment of all official Garda vehicles in each Division is assigned to the Divisional Officer, who may allocate vehicles between stations as required by operational requirements.

Procurement

I am informed that where additional resources such as equipment including office equipment and furniture are required, applications are made by individual stations through the Divisional office to Garda Procurement.

For example, in respect of 2017 and to date in 2018 furniture and flooring was purchased for Monaghan, Carrickmacross and Bailieborough Garda Stations totalling €30,000.

All Garda operational members, including, members from Cavan/Monaghan Division have access to an on-line application system via the Garda intranet Portal for operational uniforms, and where they have a requirement for these items, applications are processed via this system. Procurement also processes requests from members for specialist uniform and equipment, including for example personal protective equipment, footwear, motorcycle uniforms, and epaulettes. It is not possible in the time available to identify the breakdown of such applications which relate to counties Cavan and Monaghan.

Finally, I am informed that where there is a requirement for additional IT infrastructure these applications are processed centrally via Garda ICT.

Garda Youth Diversion Projects

45. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if there has been consultation with young persons regarding delivering the best and most meaningful programmes in an improved Garda youth diversion programme, especially in disadvantaged areas. [22649/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): My colleague Minister David Stanton has lead responsibility in this area and I know that he is totally committed to ensuring that these very valuable programmes are delivered to the highest standard. As has been indicated previously in replies to the House on this issue, meaningful consultation on this matter is of paramount importance. I can confirm for the Deputy that my Department is running an extensive consultation process at present, essentially around two questions:

- The development of an agreed statement of what the Garda Youth Diversion Project (GYDP) service is – how it should operate, the range of interventions and supports deployed

to assist participants in turning their lives around and to support their families and to prevent young people becoming involved in crime in the first place; the strong links required with other service providers and programmes that support communities, families and young people at risk to ensure effectiveness of the GYDP service; and the sense of local community participation and ownership of the work that is also critical to the design of programmes of work that take account of local circumstances and needs and thus have the potential to make a long-term impact; and

- the optimum local geographical areas for organisation of individual projects with the objectives of keeping those strong links with local community and other service provider stakeholders that are essential to the successful operation of GYDP and of ensuring that the service is available throughout the State.

It was originally envisaged that the consultation process would run to the end of April, but such has been the interest from local GYDPs and other stakeholders in participating and the number of requests for meetings that the opportunity to participate and make views known has been extended to mid-June.

My Department has already had consultations with a number of young people who participate in GYDPs and that has been organised by a number of projects with assistance from the GYDP Best Practice Team, which works with my Department in the management of the project network. My Department has also made arrangements with the Participation Hub in the Department of Children and Youth Affairs for a formal consultation process to be undertaken by them also, which will also feed into this process. A Steering Committee drawn from the various stakeholders within the GYDP network etc. has been established to advise on design of this process, including on arrangements for participation of young people in further design work and in a series of local consultation meetings. The Steering Committee met on 17 May 2018 and arrangements are being made now to establish a small advisory group of young people who have participated in GYDPs and who will be charged with design of the local consultations with their peers, including the questions to be asked. This work will be completed as soon as possible and the local consultations will take place over the next month or so. The feedback will be compiled and a report published and this – together with the feedback from all elements of the overall consultation process – will be a valuable contribution to the future direction of the organisation and of the day-to-day work of Garda Youth Diversion projects.

Garda Resources

46. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the additional support in equipment and vehicles, in addition to extra Garda numbers, allocated to counties Longford and Westmeath in the past three years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22540/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will appreciate, decisions in relation to the provision and allocation of Garda vehicles are a matter for the Garda Commissioner in the light of his identified operational demands and the availability of resources. As Minister, I have no direct role in the matter.

I can confirm, however, that this Government is fully committed to tackle all forms of criminality and this is evidenced by the increased allocation of resources to An Garda Síochána in recent times.

Some €1.65 billion has been allocated to the Garda Vote for 2018. This is an increase of approximately 2% over the allocation for 2017.

Some €342 million, including €217 million in additional funding under the Capital Plan, is being invested in Garda ICT infrastructure between 2016 and 2021 to enable An Garda Síochána to deploy the latest cutting edge technologies in delivering professional policing and security services for the community.

Further, the Government's Capital Plan 2016 – 2021 provides for significant resourcing of An Garda Síochána. In particular, €46 million was allocated for investment in the Garda Fleet to ensure that An Garda Síochána has a modern, effective and fit-for-purpose fleet and this is in addition to the investment of almost €30 million in the period 2013 to 2015. In total in the period 2013 to end of 2017, almost €44 million has been invested in the fleet with some 2,000 vehicles coming on stream in that period.

I am informed by the Garda authorities that the allocation of Garda vehicles is monitored and reviewed on a continual basis and that vehicles are allocated between districts as required by operational circumstances including, for example, when vehicles are required to substitute for vehicles under repair.

I am informed by the Garda authorities that between 2015 and 2017, a total of 29 vehicles were allocated to Roscommon Longford Division, comprising 11 vehicles in 2015, 10 vehicles in 2016 and 8 vehicles allocated in 2017. The fleet in Roscommon/Longford Division currently comprises 53 vehicles. This represents an overall increase of 11 vehicles since December 2014.

For the same period, a total of 34 vehicles were allocated to the Westmeath Division, comprising 9 vehicles allocated in 2015, 20 vehicles in 2016 and 5 vehicles in 2017. The current strength of the fleet in Westmeath Division is 69 vehicles. This represents an overall increase of 20 vehicles since December 2014.

Regarding other equipment, I am informed that a great deal of new IT and office equipment has been allocated to the Roscommon/Longford and Westmeath Divisions in recent years.

Finally, I am informed by the Commissioner that the strength of the Roscommon/Longford and the Westmeath Divisions on 30 April 2018, the latest date for which information is currently available, was 311 and 312 respectively. There are also 7 Garda Reserves and 30 Garda civilian staff attached to the Roscommon/Longford Division and 12 Garda Reserves and 23 Garda civilian staff attached to the Westmeath 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. I am further informed that, of the recruits who have attested as members of An Garda Síochána since re-opening of the Garda college and who are performing mainstream duties nationwide, 15 have been assigned to the Roscommon Longford Division and 32 have been assigned to Westmeath Division.

Gangland Crime

47. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his views on crime gangs in the Dublin region in 2018 compared to 2017. [22381/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I would like to thank the Deputy for raising this important issue.

An Garda Síochána have made important progress in tackling the insidious threat of organised crime, particularly in Dublin's North Inner-City. There is ongoing contact between officials from my Department and An Garda Síochána to ensure a proactive approach is taken

to bring to justice those who seek to carry out such shocking murders and prevent further loss of life where possible.

The Government, for its part, is committed to providing An Garda Síochána with the necessary resources to tackle this and all forms of criminality in our State.

The House will be aware that Operation Hybrid was established to coordinate the response to violent crime in Dublin and address concerns about community safety, particularly in the North East Inner City (NEIC). This operation benefits from significant support by the Armed Support Unit.

As of 15 April 2018, the robust Garda response to the series of shootings perpetrated by violent criminals in Dublin has resulted in:

- 73 arrests;
- 13 charges in total (of which 10 charges related to murder investigations, 3 charges for related offences);
- 37 firearms seized (in relation to murder offences);
- In the region of 270 searches;
- 16,514 lines of enquiry conducted with more than 57,317 high visibility checkpoints implemented with significant support from Armed Support Units; and
- A significant amount of CCTV footage, mobile phone traffic, and forensic evidence has also been examined.

Indeed, An Garda Síochána have stated that they have prevented in excess of 50 potential gang-related murders as a result of targeted policing operations since the incident at the Regency Hotel in 2016. In addition, one person has been convicted in January of this year for a feud-related murder and other criminal trials are ongoing.

Along with vigorously pursuing the investigation of shootings and other violent incidents, Gardaí have had significant successes in targeting the drugs trade, which fuels the activities of organised criminals. We have already seen a series of very significant drugs seizures, as well as important seizures of firearms and significant banking information.

We have also seen unprecedented international cooperation between Irish and Spanish authorities, leading to important arrests and seizures, with police officers from both jurisdictions participating in successful joint operations in Ireland and in Spain. In this context I would like to take this opportunity to commend the work of both the Spanish Authorities and An Garda Síochána which recently resulted in a significant seizure of drugs estimated to be valued at €3.4 million and the arrest of five individuals, four of whom are Irish citizens. These drugs were intercepted before they had a chance to be transported to Ireland.

It is also worth noting the substantial progress being made on the implementation of the Mulvey Report in helping to regenerate Dublin's North East Inner City and I will come back to this body of work later, time permitting.

I can assure the House that this Government remains entirely committed to ensuring An Garda Síochána continues to have the resources required to tackle this, and all forms of criminality, in our State.

Garda Stations

48. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the way in which stations are manned by single Garda officers; the supports in this regard; the geographic area of each; and the length of time they are planned to be single Garda stations in tabular form. [22692/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I should say at the outset that the distribution of Garda personnel is exclusively the statutory responsibility of the Garda Commissioner.

I am informed by the Commissioner that in order to deliver an effective policing service, it is essential that Garda management have the flexibility to deploy Garda resources to meet operational policing needs and address critical issues as they arise. For this reason, it is a matter for the Divisional Chief Superintendent to determine the optimum distribution of duties among the personnel available to him or her having regard to the profile of the area and its specific needs at any given time.

I am informed that there are 148 Garda stations that are manned by a single member of An Garda Síochána, many of which are open part-time only. I am further informed that they have the full support of their Divisional colleagues when required at the discretion of management. In addition, when appropriate, the work of local Gardaí is augmented by a large 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.

The Deputy will be aware that on foot of a commitment in the Programme for Government, the Garda Síochána Inspectorate, at the request of the Policing Authority, is carrying out a review of the dispersal and use of resources available to An Garda Síochána in the delivery of policing services to local communities. The Authority has informed the Inspectorate that the review should take account of:

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

The review will be comprehensive including a consultative process with local communities. It is the view of the Garda Síochána Inspectorate that the review should be completed within the first half of this year.

I can assure the House that the Government is committed to ensuring a strong and visible police presence throughout the country in order to maintain and strengthen community engagement, provide reassurance to citizens and to deter crime. To make this a reality for all, the Government has in place a plan for an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 personnel by 2021, including 15,000 Garda members.

Real, tangible progress has been made towards this goal. Garda numbers, taking account of projected retirements, increased to 13,551 at the end of 2017 - a net increase of over 600 since the end of 2016.

The Deputy will be aware that in 2010 a previous Government closed the Garda College and imposed a moratorium - the measures imposed at that time had a negative impact on Garda numbers across all Divisions and the legacy of these decisions continues to have consequences for policing. When it had brought about an early exit from the bailout and stabilized the public finances, in September 2014 the then Government reopened the College and since then just under 1,800 recruits have attested as members of An Garda Síochána and are performing main-stream duties nationwide.

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 in March. Further, Garda numbers, taking account of projected retirements, are on track to reach 14,000 by the end of this year.

Taking account of projected retirements, reaching a strength of 15,000 by 2021 will require some 1,600 more Garda members to be recruited on a phased basis over the next two years. This is an ambitious programme of accelerated recruitment. To ensure a continuous pipeline of candidates a new recruitment drive was launched by the Commissioner last week with a closing date of 6 June. The competition is being undertaken by the Public Appointment Service on behalf of the Commissioner and applications should be made to www.publicjobs.ie.

In addition to the investment in more Gardaí, 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. We are now rebuilding the organisation and providing the Commissioner with the resources needed to deploy increasing numbers of Gardaí. Undoubtedly, the ongoing recruitment process will support all Garda activities and enhance visibility within our communities and will enable the Commissioner to provide additional resources across every Garda Division as new Garda recruits continue to come on stream.

The information sought by the Deputy in relation to geographical area of the Garda stations manned by a single member of An Garda Síochána is in the table.

Stations with one Garda, 30 April 2018.

Station	TOTAL
ADARE	1
AGLISH	1
AHASCRAUGH	1
AN CHARRAIG	1
ANNASCAUL	1
ARDFINNAN	1
ARDMORE	1
ARLES	1
ATHEA	1
ATHLEAGUE	1
AUGHRIM	1
AVOCA	1
BAILE AN FHEIRTÉARAIG	1
BALLINDINE	1

Station	TOTAL
BALLINGARRY SOUTH	1
BALLINTRA	1
BALLON	1
BALLYCOTTON	1
BALLYCULLANE	1
BALLYDUFF	1
BALLYGAR	1
BALLYHEIGUE	1
BALLYLANDERS	1
BALLYMACARBERRY	1
BALLYMORE	1
BALLYNOE	1
BALLYPOREEN	1
BALLYVAUGHAN	1
BALTIMORE	1
BANGOR ERRIS	1
BANSHA	1
BARNADERG	1
BÉAL ÁTHA AN GHAORTHA	1
BENNETSBRIDGE	1
BLACKWATER	1
BOHERBUE	1
BONNICONLON	1
BORRIS	1
BORRIS-IN-OSSORY	1
BORRISOLEIGH	1
BRUREE	1
BUTTEVANT	1
CAMPILE	1
CAPPAWHITE	1
CARNA	1
CARRICKBYRNE	1
CARRICK-ON-BANNOW	1
CARRIG NA BHFEAR	1
CARRIGTWOHILL	1
CASTLEMAINE	1
CLOCH NA RÓN	1
CLOGHAN	1
CLOGHEEN	1
CLONASLEE	1
CLONMANY	1
CLOUGHJORDAN	1
CLOYNE	1
COACHFORD	1
CONG	1
CONVOY	1
CREGGS	1
DRIMOLEAGUE	1

Questions - Written Answers

Station	TOTAL
DRINAGH	1
DURROW	1
DURRUS	1
EYRECOURT	1
FETHARD	1
FOYNES	1
GLANTAINE	1
GLEANN NA MUAIDHE	1
GLENAMADDY	1
GLENBEIGH	1
GLENGARRIFF	1
GLENMORE	1
GOLDEN	1
HACKETSTOWN	1
HOLYCROSS	1
HOSPITAL	1
INDREABHÁN	1
INNISHANNON	1
KEADUE	1
KEALKIL	1
KENAGH	1
KILBRITTAIN	1
KILDORRERY	1
KILDYSART	1
KILLEAGH	1
KILLESHANDRA	1
KILLIMOR	1
KILMACRENNAN	1
KILMOGANNY	1
KILRICKLE	1
KILSHEELAN	1
KILTIMAGH	1
KILWORTH	1
KINNITTY	1
KNOCK	1
KNOCKNAGOSHALL	1
LEITIR MÓIR	1
LETTERFRACK	1
LISCARROLL	1
LISDOONVARNA	1
LIXNAW	1
LORRHA	1
LOUTH	1
MAIGH CUILINN	1
MILFORD	1
MONEYGALL	1
MONIVEA	1
MOUNTCHARLES	1

23 May 2018

Station	TOTAL
MOYLOUGH	1
MULLINAHONE	1
MULTYFARNHAM	1
MYSHALL	1
OULART	1
OYLEGATE	1
PALLASKENRY	1
PASSAGE EAST	1
PETTIGO	1
PILTOWN	1
PORTMAGEE	1
PORTROE	1
RATHCORMAC	1
RATHMORE	1
RATHMULLEN	1
RATHVILLY	1
RHODE	1
ROCKCORRY	1
ROSSCARBERY	1
ROSSES POINT	1
ROSSLARE STRAND	1
SHERCOCK	1
SHILLELAGH	1
SHINRONE	1
SHRULE	1
SKREEN	1
SMEAR	1
SNEEM	1
STUAKE	1
SWANLINBAR	1
TARELTON	1
TEMPLETUOHY	1
TIMOLEAGUE	1
URLINGFORD	1
WATERVILLE	1
WHITEGATE	1
WILLIAMSTOWN	1
WOODFORD	1
Total	148

Garda Deployment

49. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will review the significant decline in the number of gardaí assigned to Rathcoole Garda station since 2014 with the intent to increase Garda personnel at the station; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22375/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I should say at the outset that the distribution of Garda personnel is exclusively the statutory responsibility of the Garda

Commissioner.

As the Deputy will be aware the Rathcoole Garda Station forms part of the Dublin Metropolitan Region (DMR) West Division. I am informed by the Commissioner that on 30 April 2018, the latest date for which figures are readily available, the strength of the DMR West Division was 672 of whom 14 were assigned to Rathcoole Garda Station. There are also 26 Garda Reserves and 55 civilians attached to the Division.

I can assure the House that the Government is committed to ensuring a strong and visible police presence throughout the country in order to maintain and strengthen community engagement, provide reassurance to citizens and to deter crime. To make this a reality for all, the Government has in place a plan for an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 personnel by 2021, including 15,000 Garda members.

Real, tangible progress has been made towards this goal. Garda numbers, taking account of projected retirements, increased to 13,551 at the end of 2017 - a net increase of over 600 since the end of 2016.

The Deputy will be aware that in 2010 a previous Government closed the Garda College and imposed a moratorium - the measures imposed at that time had a negative impact on Garda numbers across all Divisions and the legacy of these decisions continues to have consequences for policing. When it had brought about an early exit from the bailout and stabilized the public finances, in September 2014 the then Government reopened the College and since then just under 1,800 recruits have attested as members of An Garda Síochána and are performing mainstream duties nationwide, 155 of whom have been assigned to the DMR West Division.

It is important to appreciate that the increased specialisation within An Garda Síochána means that the number of Gardaí assigned to various Divisions does not include those assigned to various special bureaus or units and, of course, those Gardaí are also undertaking critical policing work, e.g. the Garda National Bureau of Criminal Investigation, the Armed Support Units, the Garda National Economic Crime Bureau and the Garda National Drugs and Organised Crime Bureau. More than 120 extra Garda were assigned to the specialist units within Special Crime Operations since 2017 alone.

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 in March. Further, Garda numbers, taking account of projected retirements, are on track to reach 14,000 by the end of this year.

Taking account of projected retirements, reaching a strength of 15,000 by 2021 will require some 1,600 more Garda members to be recruited on a phased basis over the next two years. This is an ambitious programme of accelerated recruitment. To ensure a continuous pipeline of candidates a new recruitment drive was launched by the Commissioner last week with a closing date of 6 June. The competition is being undertaken by the Public Appointment Service on behalf of the Commissioner and applications should be made to www.publicjobs.ie.

In addition to the investment in more Gardaí, 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. We are now rebuilding the organisation

and providing the Commissioner with the resources needed to deploy increasing numbers of Gardaí. Undoubtedly, the ongoing recruitment process will support all Garda activities and enhance visibility within our communities and will enable the Commissioner to provide additional resources across every Garda Division, including the DMR West Division, as new Garda recruits continue to come on stream.

Family Law Cases

50. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if the current family court system will be examined, particularly with regard to County Kerry, to consider specific courts and judges to be assigned to family law cases; if the inclusion of a dedicated court room for family law, with consultation rooms, will be provided in the planning of the new infrastructure for Tralee courthouse; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22378/18]

123. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if consideration will be given to a specific court and judges being assigned to family law cases in County Kerry; and if a dedicated court room for family law with consultation rooms will be included in the planning of the new infrastructure for Tralee courthouse; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22865/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 50 and 123 together.

The Government is committed to significant reform of the courts, including the establishment of a family law court structure that is streamlined, more efficient, and less costly.

My Department is currently working on the General Scheme of a Family Court Bill, which will aim to streamline family law court processes, clarify jurisdictional issues and provide for a set of guiding principles to help ensure that the Family Court will operate in a user-friendly and efficient manner. The intention is to establish a dedicated Family Court within the existing court structures.

The Family Court Bill will support the provisions in the Mediation Act 2017 by encouraging greater use of alternative dispute resolution to assist in more timely resolution of family law cases.

As the Deputy will appreciate, it is essential that there is proper planning and consultation with relevant stakeholders in order to ensure that the development of a new family court structure can be implemented smoothly and efficiently.

My Department has established a working group, comprising officials from my Department, the Courts Service and the Legal Aid Board, to examine the operational aspects relating to the Family Court. The intention is that the working group will develop an overall architecture for the new family court structure. The working group is consulting with other relevant stakeholders. Key issues arising in consultations include family court venues and facilities, resources and capital investment in family courts and integration of relevant family and child services to provide the best possible family law outcomes.

I hope to secure Government approval in the coming months for the General Scheme of a Family Court Bill. Once the General Scheme has been approved by Government, it will be referred to the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel for drafting and to the relevant Oireachtas Committee for pre-legislative scrutiny.

As the Deputy is aware, under the provisions of the Courts Service Act 1998, management of the courts is the responsibility of the Courts Service, which is independent in exercising its functions. Furthermore, the scheduling of court cases and the allocation of court business are matters for the Presidents of the Courts and the presiding judges who are, under the Constitution, independent in the exercise of their judicial functions.

However, in order to be of assistance to the Deputy, I have had enquiries made and the Courts Service has informed me that there is a high level of family law business in the District Court in Kerry. The current waiting time from when a case is ready to proceed is 4 to 6 weeks for listing of new cases. Additional sitting days are being provided by the District Court Judge for the hearing of family law cases and the position is being kept under review.

The Courts Service has advised that family law cases in the Circuit Court are actively managed by the County Registrar using case progression, motion days and call overs to ensure that business is dealt with as efficiently as possible. When a family law case is ready to proceed in the Circuit Court in Kerry it is scheduled for the next sitting. Additional special sittings of the Circuit Court are sought where necessary if arrears arise.

The Courts Service has also informed me that as part of its provincial capital building programme, one of the objectives of the Courts Service is to provide improved court accommodation in Tralee with appropriate facilities for the hearing of family law and other court business.

The Courts Service has further advised that it envisages a courthouse comprising four courtrooms and related consultation and other facilities as being required to meet current and future needs in Tralee. The Courts Service is currently considering a number of options for the provision of appropriate court accommodation in Tralee including the level of extension and refurbishment achievable within the confines of the existing courthouse site; whether it would be feasible to acquire an adjacent town centre site and the degree of extension and refurbishment this would allow and the development of a new courthouse on an appropriate greenfield/brownfield site. The Courts Service has informed me that a decision has not yet been made and that all options are currently under review.

Garda Procedures

51. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Question No. 121 of 4 October 2017, the number of incidents since 2015 in which sums of money, confiscated money or evidence in a case were found to be missing, stolen or lost from a Garda station by the amount of missing, stolen or lost money involved, the date it was reported and the Garda station involved. [22689/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy is aware, I had initially sought a report from the Garda authorities in relation to this matter on 02 October 2017. In their response of 07 December 2017, I was advised by An Garda Síochána that as files from pre-2015 are stored off-site it would require a disproportionate expenditure of Garda time and resources to collate the information as originally requested by the Deputy.

The Deputy will recall that after further consultation between his office and my Department, I made further arrangements for this matter to be resubmitted to the Garda authorities on 29 January 2018 and requested a report on any information that was readily available to Gardaí.

I can assure the Deputy that officials from my Department are actively following up on this request with the Garda authorities and I will contact the Deputy immediately when the report is to hand.

Garda Deployment

52. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of additional gardaí who have been allocated to Tallaght Garda station; and the rank of each. [22380/18]

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 30 April 2018, the latest date for which figures are available, the strength of the Dublin Metropolitan Region (DMR) South Division was 533 of whom 184 are assigned to Tallaght Garda Station. There are also 17 Garda Reserves and 36 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. 136 members of this cohort have been assigned to the DMR South Division of whom 51 have been assigned to Tallaght Garda Station. 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 in March. 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 Division, including the DMR South Division.

For the Deputy's information I have set out in the following table the number of Gardaí by Rank assigned to Tallaght Garda Station on 30 April 2018, the latest date for which figures are currently available.

Tallaght Garda Station by rank 30 April 2018

Station	GD	SG	IN	SU	CS	AC	TOTAL
Tallaght	162	17	4	1			184

Garda Deployment

53. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the position regarding the ongoing allocation of additional gardaí in counties Cavan and Monaghan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22398/18]

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 strength of Cavan/Monaghan Division on 30 April 2018, the latest date for which information is readily available, was 344. There are also 11 Garda Reserves and 38 Garda civilian staff attached to the Cavan/Monaghan 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.

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

I can assure the Deputy that 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 including 53 to the Cavan/Monaghan Division, 13 of whom were allocated from the most recent attestation of new Gardaí in March. 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 which will see Garda numbers, taking account of projected retirements, 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 and its legacy is still having an impact. 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 Cavan/Monaghan Division.

Garda Reports

54. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he had regard to the independent cultural audit (details supplied); and the measures he plans to pursue to increase and support morale. [22690/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I welcome the recent publication of the independent organisational culture audit commissioned by An Garda Síochána and conducted by PwC. I am sure the Deputy will agree that the conduct of such an audit, the first of its kind undertaken by An Garda Síochána, is of major significance in the context of the reform programme underway. Reform of culture is generally recognised as one of, if not the, critical component in the transformation of any organisation, albeit one of the most difficult to achieve and sustain.

I have discussed the report with the Commissioner and fully endorse his view that the report provides a valuable resource for the organisation and I share his view that it is of critical importance in informing the organisation's provision of the best supports to its people, which will in turn transform the service provided to the public.

It is encouraging that there was a strong response rate to the audit within An Garda Síochána with over 6,500 personnel – members, reserves and civilians – participating through a mix of methods including a survey, focus groups and interviews. Based on this high level of participation, the report can be regarded as establishing a very strong and representative view of the organisation's culture.

I welcome the positives in the report including, in particular, the pride in the central role An Garda Síochána plays in protecting and supporting communities, the value personnel place on using police powers appropriately and acting with integrity and honesty; the esprit de corps, and the “can do” attitude. It is important that these positives are recognised and that they are not taken for granted.

It is important to realise that these positive attributes can also become negatives if taken to extremes and, of course, the report also highlights key areas for improvement including in relation to how the leadership is perceived, how personnel are held to account, how those who speak up are treated, what is termed the “supervision vacuum” and the view, whether real or perceived, that the promotion process for the supervisory ranks is not merit-based.

These are important issues that need to be considered in depth. I am informed by the Commissioner that An Garda Síochána is considering the report in order to formulate a considered and effective response to its insights and recommendations. I understand that the senior leader-

ship team has already met collectively to discuss the report with a view to specific actions being developed before the Autumn.

My Department has, of course, a contribution to make in relation to a number of the areas identified as needing improvement including the areas of supervision and the perceived or real view that promotions at the level of sergeant and inspector are influenced by favouritism and nepotism.

In relation to supervision it is critical that new Gardaí have adequate supervision and support to carry out their duties in a manner that reflects the Code of Ethics that is now in place to guide the actions of all personnel. I know that the Commissioner is fully seized of the importance of this.

A number of competitions are currently in train to fill existing vacancies in the key supervisory ranks of Sergeant and Inspector with the aim of bringing the strength of these ranks to 2,000 and 300 respectively as agreed under the Employment Control Framework.

It is not just about filling existing vacancies. It is also about ensuring that Gardaí are doing the job that they are trained to do. As part of the civilianisation process underway, close to 80 Gardaí have been redeployed including seven sergeants and six inspectors. I have made it clear to the Commissioner that I expect this to accelerate significantly this year. To that end I welcome the fact that the Commissioner has directed that the redeployment of sergeants from administrative duties to frontline supervisory duties be prioritised in the short term to address any supervisory gaps.

The Deputy will be aware that the Government has agreed an overall vision for the Garda workforce of 21,000 by 2021 including 15,000 Gardaí. The Government is committed to ensuring that, as the number of Gardaí increases towards 15,000, the sergeant and inspector ranks expand commensurately.

In relation to promotion processes for the supervisory ranks it is important to note that the selection boards have a majority of external lay members appointed by the Policing Authority under the relevant Regulations. It is also important to say that the Commission on Public Service Appointments in its 2015 audit of the promotion process concluded that it was broadly satisfied that the processes incorporate adequate safeguards that protect the integrity of the selection processes and offers the necessary assurance that candidates are appointed on the basis of their interview performance. That said, it is clear that there is scope for the modernisation of the processes and I welcome the conclusion of the independent review commissioned by An Garda Síochána. The outcome of the review is under consideration by my Department with a view to an updated regulatory framework being developed and put in place for future competitions.

The report of the culture audit also raises issues that touch on resources more broadly. These matters will be examined in the context of the upcoming estimates process for 2019.

Garda Operations

55. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to engage with the Garda Commissioner to progress a dedicated public transport police within An Garda Síochána to ensure public safety and security for public transport users (details supplied); his views on the way in which this dedicated service should be established; the support he and his Department propose to provide to the Commissioner and his staff in the event of such a dedicated service being established; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22374/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am of course aware of the serious incident that took place recently concerning a number of youths who vandalised a DART train as it arrived into Clongriffin station. The youths in question then proceeded to engage in other serious anti-social behaviour and accost members of the public. This is completely unacceptable behaviour and will not be tolerated.

I am advised that this incident is now the subject of an official investigation by An Garda Síochána, in conjunction with Irish Rail, with CCTV footage being reviewed to help identify the culprits. Photographs were also taken at the scene of the ‘graffiti tags’ which are also being circulated in order to identify any links with known graffiti offenders and I would encourage anyone with information about this incident to contact An Garda Síochána as soon as possible

In terms of tackling this particular type of crime, I am advised by An Garda Síochána that Garda management engages extensively with transport operators and that a range of regional and local operations have been put in place to address incidents and issues that have arisen at specific locations. There is ongoing communication between An Garda Síochána and the respective control centres, and access to good quality CCTV helps provide assistance to Gardaí when investigating serious incidents, such as what we saw in Clongriffin recently.

Furthermore, the Deputy will be aware that An Garda Síochána already employs a wide range of operational measures aimed at tackling public-order offences and anti-social behaviour. These measures are underpinned by the existence of a comprehensive legal framework, which assists the Gardaí in tackling this type of crime. Of course, addressing local community concerns in relation to public order and anti-social behaviour is a key focus in An Garda Síochána’s National Community Policing Model and a range of strong legislative provisions are available to An Garda Síochána in this regard, including those under:

- the Criminal Damage Act 1991;
- Criminal Justice (Public Order) Act 1994;
- the Criminal Justice (Public Order) Act 2003; and
- the Intoxicating Liquor Acts 2003 and 2008.

For its part, the Government remains committed to ensuring that An Garda Síochána have all the necessary resources to tackle all forms of criminality in our communities. In this context, the Deputy will be aware that some €1.65 billion has been allocated to the Garda Vote for 2018 and €98.5m has been provided for Garda overtime for 2018.

The 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. Budget 2018 will support the continuation of this high level of investment in the Garda workforce and ensure that the vision of an overall workforce of 21,000 by 2021 remains on track.

The provision of these additional resources to the Commissioner is a key component in this Government’s approach to improving public safety throughout the country which will undoubtedly benefit policing in relation to transport services in Dublin and in other areas. In this regard I have no plans to engage with the Commissioner to progress a dedicated public transport unit within An Garda Síochána for the Dublin area. Investment is instead being made in enhancing the resources available for policing generally. I believe this is the best use of scarce resources.

A further consideration is the ongoing deliberations of the Commission on the Future of Policing. Its terms of reference include consideration of the structures and management arrange-

ments required for the most effective delivery of policing to meet the challenges of modern policing. I look forward to receiving its report in September.

Closed-Circuit Television Systems Provision

56. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his views on the roll-out of the community CCTV scheme and ensuring schemes can proceed.; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22685/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Deputy will be aware that the Programme for a Partnership Government commits to supporting investment in CCTV systems. In pursuance of this commitment, a new Community-based CCTV grant-aid Scheme was launched by my Department in April 2017 to assist groups in the establishment of community-based CCTV systems in their local areas. It is intended that the Scheme will run for 3 years with funding of some €1 million being made available each year.

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

Schemes funded under this scheme will supplement the existing network of CCTV systems in operation in the State, namely the 35 Garda CCTV schemes in operation comprising in excess of 500 cameras; as well as the 45 Community-based CCTV schemes encompassing some 367 cameras to which An Garda Síochána have access, and which were established under the previous grant-aid scheme funded by my Department between 2005 and 2013.

The statutory requirements governing the establishment of community CCTV systems generally require that any proposed scheme must:

- be approved by the local Joint Policing Committee,
- have the prior support of the relevant Local Authority, which must also act as Data Controller – this is a long-standing statutory requirement, set out in the Garda Síochána (CCTV) Order 2006 (S.I. No. 289 of 2006), for the establishment of community CCTV systems generally, and
- have the authorisation of the Garda Commissioner in accordance with Section 38 of the Garda Síochána Act 2005.

This is the legal basis for all community CCTV schemes, regardless of whether or not grant funding is sought from my Department to assist in their establishment.

I would like to take the opportunity to confirm that 11 applications have been received to date and I understand that the Department has been informed that a further 14 applications will be submitted this month.

4 applications under the scheme have been approved to date, with approved funding totalling almost €120,000. A further 4 applications are under active consideration. The remaining 3 applications submitted to date have been returned to the applicants concerned to enable them to provide the information necessary to qualify for grant-aid.

In establishing the grant-aid scheme, the Department consulted broadly, including with the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner, An Garda Síochána, the Office of the Attorney General and the LGMA. Full details of the grant aid package are available to download from

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my Department's website *www.justice.ie*. In addition, my officials are available to provide assistance and guidance to any interested party in relation to the scheme, with a dedicated email address available for that purpose - *communitycctv@justice.ie*.

I am keen to ensure that all interested groups, in both rural and urban areas, take advantage of the availability of this grant-aid scheme and I encourage any interested groups to make contact with my Department with any queries.

Refugee Resettlement Programme

57. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the status of Ireland's commitment to receiving 4,000 persons under the Irish refugee protection programme; the number of persons who have arrived here under the resettlement and relocation programmes as of May 2018, by countries of origin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22377/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton): As the Deputy will be aware, the Government agreed to accept 4,000 persons into the State under the Irish Refugee Protection Programme.

Under the resettlement programme, the IRPP has admitted a total of 792 refugees to date - 732 Syrians, 50 Iraqis and 10 Syrian Palestinians. A further 264 refugees - 259 Syrian and 5 Iraqi nationals - currently in Lebanon, are expected to arrive before the end of the summer, the first group of whom will come to Ireland over the next weeks.

Under the relocation programme, which is now complete, the IRPP admitted a total of 1,022 persons - 959 Syrians, 61 Iraqis, 1 Libyan and 1 Syrian Palestinian.

In addition, the Government has taken 41 unaccompanied minors from Calais to date and, working with colleagues in Tusla and the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, intends to ask Italy and Greece to provide up to 60 unaccompanied minors before the end of 2019. This will leave a balance of 1,881 persons due to come to Ireland under the Programme.

A second phase of the IRRP has now commenced to address the balance of persons still to be admitted. Two missions to Lebanon will take place in June and September 2018 with a view to selecting 345 refugees. Further missions will take place in 2019 to select an additional 600 refugees.

The Government has also recently announced a further mechanism to deliver on the commitment of 4000. The recently announced IRPP Humanitarian Assistance Programme (IHAP) will provide for the admission of up to 530 immediate family members of Irish citizens, beneficiaries of international protection and programme refugees from the top ten major source countries of refugees listed under the UNHCR Annual Global Trends Report before the end of 2019. The first call for proposals under the IHAP was launched on 14 May 2018 and will remain open until 30 June 2018. Two further calls will be made during this year and additional calls may be made in 2019.

The remaining balance under the IRPP will be admitted either by way of increased resettlement pledges or via the IHAP, if there is sufficient demand under this programme.

Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission

58. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he is satisfied with the functioning of the Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission, with particular reference to efficiency, timeliness of investigation, work practices and outcomes. [22684/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): Let me say at the outset that the Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission has a hugely important role to play in ensuring that public confidence in the Garda Síochána is safeguarded and as such, it has extensive powers under the Garda Síochána Act 2005, as amended.

As part of its effort to keep the public informed about its activities, GSOC publishes certain information concerning its operations on its website on a quarterly basis. The most recent update shows that, between January and March 2018:

- 628 calls were received on its complaints telephone line.
- 500 complaints were received.
- 490 complaints were closed.
- There were 12 referrals from the Garda Síochána for independent investigation under S.102(1) of the Garda Síochána Act (2005).
- There was 100% compliance rate in requests for documentation from the Garda Síochána.
- It took an average of 18 days for requests for information/documentation from the Garda Síochána to be fulfilled.
- 3 investigations were opened in the public interest.

During the year 2017, GSOC referred 16 files to the Director of Public Prosecutions for direction compared to five in the previous year.

As regards the efficiencies achieved by GSOC in the course of their activities, I am advised that in March 2017 the Commission initiated an internal strategic review of the organisation's processes, people and structures, resulting in the creation of a Business Improvement Team (BIT) comprising staff from all grades and business areas, which examined how GSOC operates under the existing legislation, what their current staffing requirements are, and what their future requirements would be in light of potential changes in the legislative and policing environment.

I met with the Chair of GSOC last September and discussed with her, among other things, the resourcing of GSOC. I invited her to set out for me her best assessment of the overall resource requirements to provide the level of service that complainants, and all those interested in the effective and efficient investigation of complaints against members of An Garda Síochána, expect and deserve. Subsequently, in February 2018, a detailed business case proposal for additional resources was provided by GSOC. My Department has sought some additional information from GSOC which it expects to receive very shortly. Thereafter, my Department will engage with GSOC and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform with a view to ensuring that GSOC is properly resourced to fulfil its very important functions.

Furthermore, in December 2017 GSOC submitted proposals for changes to the Garda Síochána Act 2005 with a view to improving and streamlining the provision of its services. These proposals are being examined in my Department at present. I would point out to the House that the Commission on the Future of Policing is due to report later this year and I expect that its proposals will have implications for the current oversight structures. I have advised GSOC that

it will be appropriate to await this report before making final decisions on what changes will be made to the 2005 Act.

Whilst GSOC have highlighted areas where they see improvements or enhancements which may be implemented so as to strengthen their investigative processes, I am satisfied that the staff at GSOC are committed to providing an essential public service to the highest of standards within the current statutory framework.

I can assure the Deputy that the resources and funding of GSOC are kept under continuing review to ensure it is able to operate effectively and efficiently and in accordance with its statutory remit.

Garda Accommodation

59. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when it is expected all Garda accommodation in the State will be filled; and the engagements he has had with the OPW in this regard. [22691/18]

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

I have asked the Garda Commissioner for the specific information requested and when it is to hand I will inform the Deputy accordingly.

Immigration Policy

60. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the steps he is taking to ensure that the recent Supreme Court ruling (details supplied) that the State should take account of a person's private life in certain immigration cases will be adhered to; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22699/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am informed by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service that the judgment of the Supreme Court in the case referred to by the Deputy was delivered by the Court on 24 April 2018.

My Department will, of course, be complying with the judgment in this case and I am informed that the immigration service is studying the judgment with its legal advisors on any wider implications of the case. However, it is important to note that the Supreme Court itself in the judgment stressed that the judgment related only to the cases at hand and only on the facts of these appeals. It went on to state that whether other cases are potentially affected does not arise as these appeals concern only the respondents.

Coroners Service

61. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the reason for the re-

peated delay in publication of the coroners' (amendment) Bill; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22651/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Coroners (Amendment) Bill is a very important Bill, on which my officials have already completed a great deal of work. It is a priority for me for the Government as reflected by its inclusion on the Government's list of priority legislation for publication during this Oireachtas session.

This Bill will introduce mandatory reporting, post-mortem examination and inquest in cases of direct or indirect maternal death. It will also extend the legal aid provisions, introduced for certain inquests in the Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2013, to a family member of the deceased at an inquest into a maternal death.

This will ensure clarity for responsible persons, including hospital authorities, and will support the development of transparent and accountable oversight for checking and investigating certain types of death. Most importantly, it will provide clarity and transparency for bereaved families. I take this opportunity to acknowledge the contribution made by the Deputy to the Bill, through her earlier Private Member's Bill.

It will be an offence for a responsible person not to report a mandatory reportable death to the coroner. There will also be improved provisions on the reporting of certain peri-natal and infant deaths, to support prompt and transparent provision of information by health and other authorities to bereaved families. More broadly, the Bill will also update and strengthen the legal powers available to coroners regarding reporting, post-mortem and inquest of unnatural deaths; and including more robust powers to compel attendance by witnesses and the production of documents at inquest. The Bill will also allow a wider scope for inquests, from investigating the immediate cause of death to establishing the circumstances in which the death occurred.

The public importance of effective and transparent independent investigation in such cases is obvious. In addition, these measures will strengthen our compliance with the European Convention on Human Rights.

We are awaiting a further full draft of the Bill from the Office of Parliamentary Counsel. My officials continue to work intensively to advance this work. However, I agree that it is taking considerably longer than I had wished or that we had intended to finalise the Bill for publication.

The reasons for this are genuine. It is a complex Bill, both in drafting terms and on the substance. While the Deputy's Bill and much of the work done by my Department on reforms relate to the text of the 2007 Coroners Bill, that Bill provided for a comprehensive reform of coronial law and of the administrative structure of the coroner service in Ireland. That administrative reform requires significant updating and is not yet ready to proceed. In drafting terms, it is a complex exercise to translate the key reforms we are seeking to make now, which are derived from or drafted in the framework of the 2007 Bill, into the structure and language of the existing legislation which dates from 1962.

In addition, the Deputy will be aware there is a huge amount of overall legislative activity – and even of priority legislation - at present in relation both to Private Members' Bills, and to the Government's legislative programme, across a large number of fronts. The volume of legislative work means that the resource of the specialists who are available to do it is often spread very thinly.

I am currently in further contact with the Attorney General to establish how the drafting can most quickly be completed. The Office of Parliamentary Counsel has assured my Depart-

ment that they are very conscious of the timetable for this Bill and that, as a priority Bill in the Government Legislation Programme, they will make every effort to facilitate its delivery and publication before the end of the current Dáil session. I intend to move the Bill as early as possible after publication, so that, with the cooperation of all sides, we can facilitate its swift passage through the Houses.

Garda Strength

62. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the extent to which the strength of An Garda Síochána has been augmented to date; the degree to which the strength of the force will be increased in the future; if he expects stations in both urban and rural areas to benefit from the increase in the strength of the force; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22656/18]

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

I am further informed by the Commissioner that on the 30 April 2018, the latest date for which figures are readily available, the strength of An Garda Síochána was 13,632. There are also 562 Garda Reserves and more than 2,280 civilians attached to An Garda Síochána.

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. 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 in March. Further, Garda numbers, taking account of projected retirements, are on track to reach 14,000 by the end of this year.

Taking account of projected retirements, reaching a strength of 15,000 by 2021 will require some 1,600 more Garda members to be recruited on a phased basis over the next two years. This is an ambitious programme of accelerated recruitment. To ensure a continuous pipeline of candidates a new recruitment drive was launched by the Commissioner last week with a clos-

ing date of 6 June. The competition is being undertaken by the Public Appointment Service on behalf of the Commissioner and applications should be made to www.publicjobs.ie.

In addition to the investment in more Gardaí, 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.

We are now rebuilding the organisation and providing the Commissioner with the resources needed to deploy increasing numbers of Gardaí. Undoubtedly, the ongoing recruitment process will support all Garda activities and enhance visibility within both urban and rural communities and will enable the Commissioner to provide additional resources across every Garda 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 class-room based training to complete in order to receive their BA in Applied Policing. To ensure that they are properly supported and supervised and have opportunities to gain the breadth of policing experience required, the Commissioner's policy is to allocate them to specially designated training stations which have the required training and development structures and resources in place, including trained Garda tutors and access to a permanently appointed supervisory Sergeant who is thoroughly familiar with their responsibilities under the training programme.

Public Procurement Regulations

63. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he is satisfied that all bodies under his Department's remit are receiving value for money; his views on the 182 breaches amounting to €45 million of public procurement guidelines in 2016; the steps he is taking to ensure this matter is resolved; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22701/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I can assure the Deputy that every effort is made to ensure that the voted allocations for the Justice Vote Group are expended in an effective and efficient manner to ensure value for money is obtained.

The total budget for the Justice Vote Group in 2018 is in region of €2.58 billion of which €1.89 billion (74%) relates to payroll and superannuation; €540 million (21%) is non pay current expenditure and €144 million (5%) is capital related. There are six votes in the Justice Vote Group in 2018 and it is the responsibility of each Accounting Officer to ensure that all expenditure is properly expended and accounted for culminating in a Statement of Internal Financial Control which accompanies the annual appropriation account for each Vote.

There is a range of oversight measures in place across the Justice sector which supports the process of ensuring that value for money is derived from voted expenditure. A Financial Management Committee comprising of the senior finance representatives from each of the Vote areas meets on a monthly basis to review expenditure against budget across the entire Vote Group. In turn, the governance agreements in place with the various agencies and bodies under the remit of the Department reflect the need for appropriate financial and budgetary oversight and management and each Vote area has appropriate finance units and internal audit functions, relative to the size, legal framework, and complexity of the organisation in place. This further strengthens financial management across the sector to ensure that voted funding is spent appropriately and value for money is obtained.

The specific figures cited by the Deputy refer in approximate terms to the supply arrangements reported under Department of Public Expenditure and Reform Circular 40/2002 across all of the Votes in the Justice Group in 2016. These relate to scenarios where tendering is not deemed feasible and a return is made to the Comptroller and Auditor General in compliance with that circular. It is important to point out that the vast majority of procurements are the subject of up to date tender competitions, many of which are now run in conjunction with the Office of Government Procurement. Every effort is made to minimise the number of supply arrangements which fall to be reported under Circular 40/02. However, across Departments generally there will always be some procurement arrangements which fall to be reported under this circular including for example in relation to the proprietary nature of goods and services where there is a sole supplier of the goods or services in question or where annual licensing renewals arise including for example in relation to ICT software and systems. There are other situations where tendering may not always be feasible, such as where specific specialist knowledge is required, where urgency is a factor or where it has been necessary to extend a pre-existing contract for a period of time pending new tender competitions being completed.

Prison Investigations

64. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Question No. 126 of 10 May 2018, if the report (details supplied) will be made available to persons who had co-operated with the investigation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22652/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by the Irish Prison Service that the enquiry into this matter was considered an operational matter and it was not envisaged that it would be published or furnished to any party to the enquiry. As was outlined in Parliamentary Question 156 of 8 February 2018 there were legal and procedural flaws identified in the way the enquiry was conducted and a second external investigator was appointed to bring the enquiry to a satisfactory conclusion. Unfortunately it proved neither practical nor feasible to continue with the enquiry. In the circumstances, therefore, the report will not be made available to persons that had co-operated with the investigation.

I am informed, however, that the Director General of the Irish Prison Service corresponded directly with an individual who had co-operated with the investigation and advised that person the circumstances in which it proved neither practical or feasible to continue with the enquiry.

I also refer the Deputy to the replies given to Parliamentary Questions 15317/17, 28026/17, 55024/17 and 20602/18 which relate to this matter and provide additional clarification.

Protected Disclosures

65. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the status of the complaint made on 8 May 2014 about Garda involvement in the heroin trade in Athlone; the status of the investigation into same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22697/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy is aware, the Protected Disclosures Act was enacted in 2014 to allow employees to bring alleged wrongdoing to the attention of the appropriate authorities. The Act also affords very important protections to persons making protected disclosures and specifically included the GSOC as a designated body for receipt of protected disclosures. The protections afforded under the Act include protection from dismissal and other forms of penalisation and for the protection of the identity

of persons making disclosures. I am sure that the Deputy appreciates that the protection of whistleblowers rightly prioritises the confidentiality of the process, which is central to the efficacy of that process.

A further point needs to be made. The protected disclosure that the Deputy refers to was not made to me as Minister. As I understand it, the protected disclosure was made directly to the Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission (GSOC) by the member. This House is well aware of the independence of GSOC so I need not labour the issue except to say GSOC's statutory independence prevents me from interfering in any matter that that body may or may not be investigating. That is the guarantee of GSOC's independence and the guarantee to persons making complaints that their complaints will be considered independently and free from outside interference.

I have full confidence in the role that GSOC plays in investigating complaints of wrongdoing in the Gardaí, including protected disclosures from members. Therefore, I urge members of this House to allow GSOC the time and space necessary to carry out its investigations. What may seem like a simple enough issue to the member, can conceal layers of complexity that emerge only when an investigation gets under way. Bear in mind that GSOC have a responsibility to persons making complaints as well as to those against whom allegations are made to carry out a full, complete and impartial investigation in order to arrive at the truth.

With regard to the specific member referred to in the Deputy's question, while there has been correspondence between my Department and the legal representatives of the Garda in question, the matters raised relate to workplace arrangements. There are matters raised in the correspondence that I, as Minister, cannot involve myself in but I have asked the Garda Commissioner for an up-to-date report.

I have to emphasise one point: I, as Minister, have no authority to direct the Garda Commissioner in matters concerning the control, operation and direction of An Garda Síochána. Nor can I interfere in any investigation undertaken, or being undertaken, by An Garda Síochána. Similarly, certain workplace issues which have also been raised in the correspondence are not matters in which I have authority to act, nor indeed would the Deputy wish me to have such authority. These are properly matters for the Garda Commissioner.

This may be difficult for the Deputy to accept but he and others in this House would be quick to point out the flaws in any system which would allow any Minister for Justice to interfere with the role of the Garda Commissioner or to seek to direct the Garda Commissioner how to handle workplace issues or investigations. The Garda Commissioner is entitled to have the powers and independence of that office respected. GSOC are entitled to the same respect.

I will await the outcome of any investigation that GSOC and An Garda Síochána are pursuing and give consideration to what emerges.

Finally, I want to remind the House that term of reference [p] of the Disclosures Tribunal covers complaints by members of the Gardaí who had made a protected disclosure prior to 16 February 2017 and who were, as a result, targeted or discredited with the knowledge or acquiescence of senior members of the Garda Síochána.

Direct Provision Data

66. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons in direct provision according to age, gender and nationality; the length of time persons have been waiting to have their application processed; the number waiting for more than one,

two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine and ten years; the number and location of the accommodation centres; the annual cost of direct provision; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22376/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy is aware when a person comes to Ireland seeking international protection status under international law, the State offers inter alia full bed and board including all utilities, medical facilities ensuring the applicant's basic needs are met while their application is being processed. This is referred to as 'direct provision' and not all applicants take up this offer.

On 6 May 2018, the Reception and Integration Agency of my Department had contracts for 35 accommodation centres for protection applicants. Accommodation centres are located in the following counties: Clare; Cork; Dublin; Galway; Kerry; Kildare; Laois; Limerick; Longford; Louth; Mayo; Meath; Monaghan; Sligo; Tipperary; Waterford; and Westmeath. The 2018 budget for this accommodation is €66.6 million.

On 31 December 2016, the International Protection Act 2015 (IPA 2015) was commenced, providing for the introduction of a single application procedure for people seeking international protection in the State. The 2015 Act replaces the previous sequential application system with a single application process, for asylum, subsidiary protection and permission to remain in the State, bringing Ireland into line with the processing arrangements applicable in other EU Member States. However, the Act also contained transitional arrangements which has put further pressures on processing. The main challenge now faced is the need to quickly process the substantial number of cases on hand many of which were carried over from the previous system.

As of 17 May 2018, there are a total of 3,002 applications for international protection pending in the International Protection Office awaiting a first instance decision, where the applicant is accommodated under the system of Direct Provision. Over half of these cases are less than one year in the system, 95% are two years or less and 99.5% are three years or less. Just 15 cases have been identified as pending in the IPO for more than 3 years and the length of time taken to process these particular cases may be due to the personal circumstances of the applicant. This is a major improvement from the situation when the McMahon Working Group reported on the matter in June 2015.

Some 535 of the 3,002 pending applications were made before the commencement of the 2015 Act but were not finalised by the former Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner (ORAC) and the former Refugee Appeals Tribunal (RAT) by that date. These applications reverted to be processed by the IPO under the transitional provisions of the International Protection Act 2015.

The following table shows the number of persons residing in accommodation provided under the system of Direct Provision. The figures include both applicants and persons who are outside the protection process who remain in Direct Provision while they transition to mainstream accommodation. No breakdown is provided for nationalities with less than 10 applicants due to the increased risk of their identification, which is prohibited under Section 26 of the International Protection Act 2015.

Questions - Written Answers

Nationality	Female						Male							Grand Total
	under 18	18-35	36-50	51-65	65+	Total	under 18	18-35	36-50	51-65	65+	Total		
Afghanistan	6	3	2	0	0	11	10	146	17	3	0	176	187	
Albania	58	90	32	4	1	185	73	142	42	11	0	268	453	
Algeria	7	10	4	0	0	21	9	81	38	2	0	130	151	
Angola	5	12	1	2	0	20	3	3	3	0	0	9	29	
Armenia	1	3	1	0	0	5	3	2	3	0	0	8	13	
Bangladesh	22	25	5	0	0	52	13	102	44	0	0	159	211	
Benin	4	2	1	0	0	7	1	1	1	0	0	3	10	
Bolivia	4	0	2	0	0	6	1	3	1	0	0	5	11	
Botswana	3	5	9	1	0	18	3	3	0	0	0	6	24	
Brazil	3	1	3	0	0	7	1	0	2	0	0	3	10	
Burundi	2	3	0	0	0	5	1	6	4	0	0	11	16	
Cameroon	7	18	12	0	2	39	5	11	9	2	0	27	66	
Congo, The Democratic Republic Of The	55	66	24	5	0	150	63	74	46	3	0	186	336	
Congo, The Republic Of The	0	3	1	0	0	4	0	2	4	1	0	7	11	
Cote D'Ivoire	2	1	4	0	0	7	0	2	2	0	0	4	11	
Egypt	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	6	6	2	1	15	16	
Eritrea	1	2	2	0	0	5	1	3	3	0	0	7	12	
Ethiopia	1	3	4	0	0	8	4	4	7	0	0	15	23	
Georgia	30	37	22	9	0	98	31	101	53	8	0	193	291	
Ghana	3	6	4	1	0	14	5	12	20	1	0	38	52	
India	3	13	3	0	0	19	4	19	10	1	1	35	54	
Iran (Islamic Republic Of)	1	3	5	1	1	11	0	15	4	0	0	19	30	
Iraq	11	15	4	3	1	34	16	37	10	2	0	65	99	
Kenya	4	2	2	0	0	8	1	0	2	0	0	3	11	
Kosovo / UNSCR 1244	7	6	1	0	0	14	2	6	3	0	0	11	25	
Kuwait	0	2	0	1	0	3	4	5	4	0	0	13	16	
Liberia	1	1	0	0	0	2	5	1	2	1	0	9	11	
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	4	2	0	0	0	6	4	14	5	0	0	23	29	
Malawi	33	55	20	5	0	113	38	60	23	1	0	122	235	
Malaysia	4	2	2	0	0	8	6	0	1	1	0	8	16	
Mauritius	11	4	4	1	0	20	5	6	9	1	0	21	41	
Morocco	2	3	2	0	0	7	3	8	4	2	0	17	24	
Nepal	3	6	0	0	0	9	2	9	2	0	0	13	22	
Nigeria	119	121	110	12	1	363	149	72	96	8	0	325	688	
Pakistan	82	63	46	5	2	198	84	231	124	21	5	465	663	

Palestinian Territory, Occupied	3	2	2	0	0	7	4	16	2	1	0	23	30
Russian Federation	4	2	2	1	0	9	3	3	5	4	0	15	24
Rwanda	3	2	3	0	0	8	5	2	1	0	0	8	16
Sierra Leone	7	11	5	0	0	23	7	12	2	0	0	21	44
Somalia	3	13	2	0	1	19	4	14	5	1	1	25	44
South Africa	55	56	36	8	3	158	78	18	44	11	0	151	309
Sri Lanka	1	2	1	0	0	4	1	8	0	0	0	9	13
Sudan	1	3	2	0	0	6	2	13	15	0	0	30	36
Swaziland	2	2	3	0	0	7	4	3	3	0	0	10	17
Syrian Arab Republic	100	76	25	8	2	211	94	118	31	13	1	257	468
Togo	0	1	1	0	0	2	0	5	3	0	0	8	10
Uganda	2	7	3	0	0	12	3	2	0	0	0	5	17
Ukraine	5	6	6	4	2	23	4	4	7	2	1	18	41
Venezuela	1	9	0	2	0	12	3	11	4	0	1	19	31
Zambia	3	2	1	1	0	7	3	0	0	0	0	3	10
Zimbabwe	94	193	85	7	0	379	77	123	63	2	0	265	644
Others													181
Total													5832

Garda Training

67. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will address reports from an organisation (details supplied) that up to 50% of frontline gardaí cannot participate in high speed chases or use sirens due to the fact that they do not have basic training; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22644/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As you will appreciate, it is the Garda Commissioner who has statutory responsibility for carrying on and managing and controlling generally the administration and business of An Garda Síochána including training and I, as Minister, have no direct role in the matter. It is important to say that members of An Garda Síochána undertake a wide variety of roles that require different skill sets and different kinds of training including, for example, in relation to child protection, crime scene examination, cybercrime and so forth. It is not necessary for every member to be skilled in every area of policing. In the case of advanced driving skills, not all members are required to drive on a daily basis or to have the capacity to respond emergency response calls in a high speed vehicle.

Responsibility for training lies with the Garda College and the Divisional Continuing Professional Development Schools under the overall responsibility of the Executive Director for Human Resources and People Development and I am informed by the Garda authorities that following a review of its driver training programmes in 2009, An Garda Síochána introduced a five level suite of competency based driving (CBD) courses with each level specifically catering for the required knowledge base, skill set and operational requirements of members undergoing the relevant training. The review was informed by the Garda Inspectorate’s report into roads policing. I understand that CBD Level 2 is a three week course and enables those members who successfully complete the course to drive the majority of patrol cars and public

order vans available to them. I am advised by the Commissioner that since 2009 in the region of 2,700 members have successfully completed this level of training course. This figure does not include those who would have completed driver training prior to the introduction of the new competency based driving programme.

Members who successfully complete level 2 or higher are permitted to engage in answering emergency response calls and may avail of exemptions under the Road Traffic Legislation where necessary and safe to do so. In addition, where exceptional circumstances arise which require a subject vehicle to be detained, these members may engage in tactical resolution to stop the vehicle where authorised to do so by the relevant Garda communications room.

The Deputy will be aware that under this Government's programme of accelerated recruitment, just under 1,800 new recruits have attested as members of An Garda Síochána since the reopening of the Garda College in September 2014. I am informed by the Commissioner that this welcome increase in the strength of the Garda rank together with some 2,000 new vehicles coming on stream in the period 2013 to 2017 has resulted in a continuous demand for driver training courses. While this has resulted in some delays in the provision of training courses, I have no information to suggest that it has affected the capacity of An Garda Síochána to respond to incidents as required.

I am advised that Garda management are conducting a review to identify how the delivery of the current driver training system can be improved. I understand that consultations have taken place with the PSNI and other police services to identify best practice with regard to models of training. Pending the outcome of this review I am advised that places on driving courses will continue to be allocated on a scheduled basis with priority being given where there is an immediate operational demand for drivers in a Division or Unit.

Garda Training

68. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of serving gardaí who have completed the CPD2 driving courses; if he is satisfied an adequate number of gardaí have this training; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22683/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As you will appreciate, it is the Garda Commissioner who has statutory responsibility for carrying on and managing and controlling generally the administration and business of An Garda Síochána including training and I, as Minister, have no direct role in the matter. It is important to say that members of An Garda Síochána undertake a wide variety of roles that require different skill sets and different kinds of training including, for example, in relation to child protection, crime scene examination, cybercrime and so forth. It is not necessary for every member to be skilled in every area of policing. In the case of advanced driving skills, not all members are required to drive on a daily basis or to have the capacity to respond emergency response calls in a high speed vehicle.

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members who successfully complete the course to drive the majority of patrol cars and public order vans available to them. I am advised by the Commissioner that since 2009 in the region of 2,700 members have successfully completed this level of training course. This figure does not include those who would have completed driver training prior to the introduction of the new competency based driving programme.

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Garda Reserve

69. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of Garda reserves in each of the Cork divisions; the number of new reserves recruited in each division; the number of reserves in each division who went on to become gardaí or are in training in each of the past three years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22694/18]

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

I am advised by the Commissioner that the strength of the Reserve on the 30 April 2018 was 562. It is regrettable that there has been a substantial reduction in the strength of the Reserve in recent years from a peak of 1,164 in 2013. The fall-off arises from a range of factors, not least the lifting in 2014 of the moratorium on recruitment of trainee Gardaí which has affected Reserve numbers in two ways: firstly, 243 serving Reserves have successfully applied to become trainee Gardaí, and secondly, resources in both An Garda Síochána and in the Public Appointments Service (PAS) have been focused on delivering an accelerated programme of recruitment of full time members of An Garda Síochána.

I am sure that the Deputy will agree, notwithstanding the very valuable contribution of Reserve members throughout the country, that it was the right decision, with finite resources,

to prioritise the running of recruitment campaigns to replenish the full-time ranks of An Garda Síochána over the last three years.

The “Programme for a Partnership Government” includes a commitment to double the Garda Reserve to act in a supportive role undertaking local patrols and crime reduction measures. In line with this, the Government has in place a plan to achieve a Reserve strength of 2,000 by 2021.

With the plan to reach 15,000 Garda members well on track, it was possible for the Commissioner and the Public Appointments Service to undertake a new recruitment campaign for Garda Reserves last March. That competition attracted 2,394 applicants of whom 498 successfully completed the initial stages carried out by PAS. These applications are currently being processed by the Garda Appointments Office. The time frame for this can vary due to a number of factors, including the length of the vetting process which may, for example, be more time consuming if the applicant has resided abroad or is deferred for medical reasons. It is expected that the first of the successful candidates will commence training in the Garda College in the coming months.

In conjunction with the major expansion of the Reserve over the next number of years, we must ensure that it is used to optimum effect to support effective policing. To inform future decisions around the use of the Reserve, An Garda Síochána is conducting a strategic review as a matter of priority with a view to completion in the first half of the year as set out in the Policing Plan 2018.

As a first step, the Garda Executive has taken a decision to transfer the management of the Reserve to the Assistant Commissioner with responsibility for Community Engagement. This is intended to ensure that its development and deployment is viewed more broadly through a community policing lens. This is a very welcome step as it is my strong view that the greatest dividend to be gained from the Reserve is in terms of a visible presence on the ground and engaging with local communities.

For the Deputy’s information I have set out in the table the number of Reserves in each of the Cork Division as of 30 April 2018, the latest date for which figures are currently available. I have requested the specific information asked by the Deputy in relation to the number of reserves from each of the Cork Divisions who attested as members of An Garda Síochána in last three years or are currently in the Garda College from the Commissioner and I will revert to the Deputy when this information is to hand.

Garda Reserve Strength 30 April 2018

Division	Total
Cork City	42
Cork North	12
Cork West	8

Foreign Conflicts

70. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the engagement he has had with An Garda Síochána with regard to Irish citizens in Syria engaged in the conflict there. [22688/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will appreciate that, like all other open and democratic societies Ireland faces a threat from internation-

al or jihadi-inspired terrorism. The expert assessment is that while an attack here is possible, it is unlikely.

The Garda Authorities will continue to take all necessary security measures, supported where required by the Defence Forces, that are proportionate to the threat. It would be unwise to disclose publicly the detail of those measures as that would simply serve to undermine their effectiveness.

What I will say is that the Garda Authorities have in place robust tactical response, prevention and disruption capabilities to combat the terrorist threat. The considerable skills, expertise and resources of our Defence Forces are also available, as needed, in this regard. The Authorities here exercise those capabilities, individually and jointly, publicly and privately on a regular basis to ensure preparedness.

While there is a small number of people in Ireland whose activities in support of jihadist-type extremism give cause for concern, they are monitored on an ongoing basis with a view to preventing offences and securing evidence for prosecutions.

There is also a small number of people, estimated to be in the order of 30 or so, who have travelled from Ireland to fight with jihadist-type groups in the conflict in Syria and Iraq. Unfortunately, a number of those are understood to have lost their lives. The Deputy will understand, of course, that in the circumstances of conflict, it can be difficult to ensure the reliability of information in matters such as these.

The Gardaí work very closely on an ongoing basis with their security and intelligence counterparts in the UK, EU and other states in respect of these issues. I will continue to provide significant resources to the Gardaí to upgrade and expand their information-sharing capabilities, notably to ensure enhanced access to EU information resources.

I can assure the House that I am briefed regularly on the status of the jihadist-inspired threat both by the Garda Authorities directly and by my officials who maintain ongoing contact with the Gardaí in this regard.

Anti-Social Behaviour

71. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons given anti-social behaviour warnings in 2016 and 2017 by children and adults; the number of anti-social behaviour orders sought in the same period; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22648/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): At the outset, I would like to thank the Deputy for raising this issue and my reply, a copy of which the Deputy should now have, includes figures most readily available from An Garda Síochána in relation to anti-social behaviour warnings. The figures are broken down by Garda region and are voluminous in nature, but I hope the Deputy finds the information useful.

I can assure the Deputy that An Garda Síochána remains committed to tackling public disorder and anti-social behaviour by working with communities to reduce this type of behaviour and enhance community safety. The Garda approach includes a strong focus on quality of life issues and collaboration with local authorities, businesses (in particular the night time economy) and other stakeholders to help address the causes of anti-social behaviour.

In setting up the ASBO regime back in 2007, these interventions - warnings, good behav-

four contracts and referrals to the Juvenile Diversion Programme - were intended to address the problem behaviour. The rationale was that if they succeeded, there would be no need to apply to the courts for an order. It was only if they failed to lead to a behaviour adjustment by the person in question that a court order would then be applied for.

It is widely acknowledged the use of ASBOs is only suitable in certain circumstances and indeed it is only one crime prevention option open to An Garda Síochána in tackling this type of crime. As the Deputy will be aware, An Garda Síochána already employs a wide range of operational measures aimed at tackling public-order offences and anti-social behaviour. These measures are underpinned by a comprehensive legal framework. Of course, addressing local community concerns in relation to public order and anti-social behaviour is a key focus in An Garda Síochána's National Community Policing Model and a range of strong legislative provisions are available to An Garda Síochána in this regard, including those under:

- the Criminal Damage Act 1991;
- Criminal Justice (Public Order) Act 1994;
- the Criminal Justice (Public Order) Act 2003; and
- the Intoxicating Liquor Acts 2003 and 2008.

All forms of anti-social behaviour, particularly the type of behaviour we witnessed in Clongriffin recently, has no place in a civilised society. For its part, the Government remains committed to ensuring that An Garda Síochána have all the necessary resources to tackle all forms of criminality in our communities. In this context, the Deputy will be aware that a very substantial budget of €1.65 billion has been allocated to the Garda Vote for 2018 and €98.5m has been provided for Garda overtime for 2018, which inter alia supports Garda activity to tackle these types of problems.

The Government is also committed to ensuring a strong and visible police presence throughout the country in order to maintain and strengthen community engagement, provide reassurance to citizens and to deter crime. The Government will continue 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.

Behaviour Warnings (Adult) (I.S)

Region/ Division	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Dublin Region	214	327	646	333	479	410	694	587	302	728	35
D.M.R. Eastern	12	17	18	14	20	*	*	*	11	*	*
D.M.R. North Central	37	18	103	115	319	137	226	524	242	701	33
D.M.R. Northern	*	81	40	26	14	*	13	14	*	12	*
D.M.R. South Central	18	64	144	13	*	192	412	19	*	*	*
D.M.R. Southern	46	39	39	11	19	16	*	*	10	*	*
D.M.R. Western	99	108	302	154	103	54	30	21	27	*	*

23 May 2018

Region/ Division	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Eastern Region	20	46	29	35	23	20	19	18	18	50	*
Kildare Div	10	*	10	*	*	*	*	*	*	28	*
Laois/Of- faly	*	17	*	10	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Meath Division	*	12	10	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Westmeath Div	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	10	*
Wicklow Div	*	12	*	14	16	*	12	*	*	*	*
Northern Region	35	41	62	45	39	41	35	24	26	25	*
Cavan/ Monaghan	*	25	48	28	23	26	19	11	13	*	*
Donegal	12	*	*	12	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Louth Divi- sion	12	13	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Sligo/ Leitrim	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	10	*
Southern Region	111	64	140	127	104	139	121	105	116	80	46
Cork City	60	13	52	33	30	17	19	31	25	*	*
Cork North	12	*	24	25	*	12	13	*	12	13	*
Cork West	*	15	*	*	10	*	*	*	*	*	*
Kerry	15	*	10	*	*	*	11	12	11	13	*
Limerick	23	23	47	56	46	99	69	51	66	46	41
South East- ern Region	21	46	95	89	56	44	56	16	*	25	*
Kilkenny/ Carlow	*	12	24	42	34	30	30	*	*	15	*
Tipperary	15	17	48	17	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Waterford Division	*	*	*	*	*	*	12	*	*	*	*
Wexford Division	*	15	19	29	11	*	*	*	*	*	*
Western Region	27	46	134	104	79	54	60	52	38	29	*
Clare	*	*	*	*	*	21	19	13	10	*	*
Galway Division	16	34	67	57	54	18	23	20	12	15	*
Mayo	*	*	48	33	18	13	18	*	16	*	*
Roscom- mon/ Longford Division	*	*	11	*	*	*	*	11	*	*	*
National Total	428	570	1,106	733	780	708	985	802	507	937	86

*denotes count was less than ten

Questions - Written Answers

Behaviour Warnings (Children)

Region/Division	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Dublin Region	224	216	330	185	141	94	77	65	32	25	*
D.M.R. Eastern	*	*	16	*	14	13	*	*	*	*	*
D.M.R. North Central	38	14	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	19	*
D.M.R. Northern	25	53	61	18	20	*	11	*	*	*	*
D.M.R. South Central	*	*	*	*	*	23	*	*	*	*	*
D.M.R. Southern	37	83	24	*	11	*	11	10	15	*	*
D.M.R. Western	119	55	224	159	92	47	36	45	13	*	*
Eastern Region	21	25	26	23	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Kildare Div	10	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Laois/Offaly	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Meath Division	*	13	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Wicklow Div	11	*	17	18	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Northern Region	46	44	16	11	11	*	*	*	*	*	*
Cavan/Monaghan	*	31	12	10	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Donegal	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Louth Division	27	12	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Sligo/Leitrim	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Southern Region	191	74	152	146	53	82	52	64	87	32	*
Cork City	101	30	36	34	16	10	*	16	21	*	*
Cork North	15	*	17	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Cork West	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Kerry	29	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Limerick	46	32	90	91	34	68	42	48	65	23	*
South Eastern Region	18	55	24	32	25	12	*	*	13	*	*
Kilkenny/Carlow	*	*	*	11	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Tipperary	13	16	19	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Waterford Division	*	18	*	*	10	*	*	*	*	*	*
Wexford Division	*	20	*	12	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Western Region	*	*	*	11	*	24	*	*	*	*	*
Clare	*	*	*	*	*	18	*	*	*	*	*
Galway Division	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Mayo	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*

Region/Division	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Roscommon/ Longford Division		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
National Total	505	421	556	408	240	224	148	141	139	71	10

*denotes count was less than ten

Refugee Resettlement Programme

72. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will reconsider contacting the UNHCR in Turkey on behalf of persons (details supplied) with a view to offering them resettlement here as per the cross party letter sent to his Department on 17 May 2018. [22639/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As I previously stated in my reply to Deputy Boyd Barrett in Parliamentary Question 52 of 6 February 2018 and in recent correspondence, there are established and successful pathways for resettlement in Ireland. While Ireland participates in a resettlement programme led by the UNHCR, it is the UNHCR which assesses each case and makes a referral to a participating State. The selection of resettlement applicants by Ireland requires a detailed consideration of case files received from UNHCR as well as personal interviews, orientation and security assessments. Ireland has received no such referral in relation to this family from UNHCR and it should be noted that Ireland does not have a resettlement programme in Turkey.

While I appreciate the vulnerability of the family who are the subject of the cross-party Deputies' request, Ireland cannot resettle people in response to one-off requests of this nature as this would potentially disadvantage the refugees who have fulfilled objective criteria to qualify for the refugee programme. Ireland must take care to respect the integrity of the UNHCR decision making process, which is based on objective criteria and standard operating procedures intended to ensure the transparent, consistent and fair treatment of people in need. Ireland must also operate within the parameters of our own resettlement programme which is both demanding and exacting. As I have already said, Ireland does not have a resettlement programme in Turkey. Other countries may have such a programme in place and may be in a position to consider a request from UNHCR favourably.

Direct Provision System

73. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the steps being taken to ensure that residents in direct provision centres are being advised of their right to vote in local elections in 2019; and the way in which contact with candidates will be facilitated in order that residents can engage fully with the democratic process. [22686/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton): My Department, through the Reception & Integration Agency (RIA), has always facilitated and encouraged the registration of and voting by protection applicants in local elections.

The general policy in relation to local elections has been to allow candidates to drop off election leaflets which could be placed in a common area in the centre where they could be picked up by residents. Candidates can provide, on the leaflets, contact details or times of politi-

cal meetings in the local community that residents can attend.

Given the particular nature of the accommodation provided in centres, there are a number of factors that would deter unrestricted access by candidates to the private living quarters of residents. These include, the communal nature of the accommodation system and the many practical and logistical difficulties that would arise for centre managers in providing unsupervised access in circumstances where families and children live together.

This general policy ensures that there are no restrictions placed on residents' voting rights, or on their rights to access whatever information candidates wish to convey to them, or on any rights to meet with candidates in the public areas of centres. It also ensures privacy in the residential units and the on-going protection of children in the centre.

There is an opportunity for the newly established Friends of the Centre group at each centre to provide information to residents on how to register to vote and on the importance of local government within the political structure of the State. The Friends of the Centre groups can also raise awareness in an informal way about the importance of voting.

Gangland Crime

74. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the extent to which consideration has been given to a serious plan to tackle organised criminal gangs with particular reference to the possibility of proscribing their membership; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22655/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I can inform the Deputy that An Garda Síochána have made important progress in tackling the insidious threat of organised crime, particularly in Dublin's North Inner-City. There is ongoing contact between officials from the Department of Justice and Equality and An Garda Síochána to ensure a proactive approach is taken to combatting those who seek to carry out such shocking murders and prevent further loss of life where possible.

The Government, for its part, is committed to providing An Garda Síochána with the necessary resources to tackle this and all forms of criminality in our State .

The House will be aware that Operation Hybrid was established to coordinate the response to violent crime in Dublin and address concerns about community safety, particularly in the North East Inner City (NEIC). This operation benefits from significant support by the Armed Support Unit.

As of 15 April 2018, the robust Garda response to the series of shootings perpetrated by violent criminals in Dublin has resulted in:

- 73 arrests;
- 13 charges in total (of which 10 charges related to murder investigations, 3 charges for related offences);
- 37 firearms seized (in relation to murder offences);
- In the region of 270 searches;
- 16,514 lines of enquiry conducted with more than 57,317 high visibility checkpoints implemented with significant support from Armed Support Units; and

- A significant amount of CCTV footage, mobile phone traffic, and forensic evidence has also been examined.

Indeed, An Garda Síochána have stated that they have prevented in the region of 50 potential gang-related murders as a result of targeted policing operations since the incident at the Regency Hotel in February, 2016. In addition, one person has been convicted in January of this year for a feud-related murder and further criminal prosecutions are ongoing.

Along with vigorously pursuing the investigation of shootings and other violent incidents, Gardaí have had significant successes in targeting the drugs trade, which fuels the activities of organised criminals. In 2018 alone we have witnessed a series of very significant drugs seizures, as well as important seizures of firearms and significant banking information.

We have also seen unprecedented international cooperation between Irish and Spanish authorities, leading to important arrests and seizures, with police officers from both jurisdictions participating in successful joint operations in Ireland and in Spain. In this context I would like to take this opportunity to commend the work of both the Spanish Authorities and An Garda Síochána which recently resulted in a significant seizure of drugs with an estimated value of €3.4 million and the arrest of five individuals, four of whom are Irish citizens. These drugs were intercepted before they had a chance to be transported to Ireland.

Given the fluid nature of such criminal groupings it is extremely difficult to quantify the number of criminal gangs operating at any particular time. Splinter groups and new gangs can form overnight. Organised Crime is constantly evolving and new innovations in crime are continuously emerging.

From time to time the question has arisen of providing for an offence of membership of a criminal gang in a manner similar to the approach taken in the Offences Against the State Acts with regard to membership of a proscribed organisation.

In this regard, it is important to understand the issues which arise in seeking to simply outlaw membership of a criminal gang in such a manner. Most significant is the fact that a criminal gang is not likely to have a similar permanency of organisation and structure that might pertain to a typical subversive organisation or other more fixed group. Similarly, relationships in criminal gangs tend to be more fluid with shifting memberships and alliances and a given individual's affiliation with a criminal network might itself be entirely contingent, contextual and ephemeral. As such, I do not believe that legislation along the lines of the Offences Against the State Acts with regard to membership of a proscribed organisation is necessary at this time.

However, Part 7 of the Criminal Justice Act 2006 (as amended by the Criminal Justice (Amendment) Act 2009) establishes a number of offences targeting the activities of those involved in organised crime. These offences include participation in a criminal organisation and directing a criminal organisation. The latter offence specifically targets those in criminal organisations who give the orders without requiring their direct participation in the commission of criminal offences. On conviction, this offence carries a penalty of up to life imprisonment.

The Criminal Justice Act 2006 also makes it an offence to conspire with one or more persons to do an act that constitutes a serious offence, irrespective of whether such act actually takes place or not.

Evidential provisions as to the existence of a criminal organisation were introduced aiding prosecution for the offences under the Act.

Provision was also introduced so that where a serious offence is committed as part of or in furtherance of a criminal organisation, it shall be treated as an aggravating factor for the pur-

pose of determining sentence.

The Deputy will appreciate that a comprehensive body of legislation exists to provide for the prosecution for offences relating to organised crime. I believe that An Garda Síochána, with the support of the significant additional resources provided to it by this Government, will prevail in facing down the threat of gangland violence in our communities. An Garda Síochána have faced down this type of threat in the past and will do so again.

I can inform the Deputy that in recent years a number of legislative measures have been introduced to tackle gang-related and associated crime. For example, the recent Proceeds of Crime (Amendment) Act 2016 provides additional powers for Gardaí; in particular, powers to allow for the immediate seizure of assets suspected of being the proceeds of crime to prevent them being disposed of has been introduced and I am pleased that the provisions of this Act are available to An Garda Síochána today.

I can assure the House that this Government remains entirely committed to ensuring An Garda Síochána continues to have the resources required to tackle this, and all forms of criminality, in our State, and I believe we have strong legislative provisions in place to assist An Garda Síochána in taking down these criminals.

Residency Permits

75. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if a person (details supplied) will be assisted to renew their GNIB card in view of the circumstances. [22653/18]

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 applied for temporary residence in the State based on parentage of an Irish Citizen Child on 23 October 2017. The application was not accepted and returned to the person concerned as a national passport was not provided - this is a mandatory document required to process any application. You will appreciate how important it is to have the true personal details of any person claiming any form of a right of residency in the State.

The person concerned subsequently informed INIS that they were unable to obtain a national passport from their embassy. INIS requested that the person concerned provide documentary evidence from that embassy confirming that they would not issue them a national passport. As it stands, the person concerned has failed to provide INIS with any documentary evidence that their embassy will not issue them with a national passport or that they have attempted to obtain a national passport.

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

Garda Stations

76. **Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans

for Donegal town Garda station to date; the improvement plans for same; the staffing numbers he plans for the station; if he will consider designating Glenties Garda station to its former district status and by extension improving Garda numbers in south-west and west County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22468/18]

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

I can however confirm that the Garda Building and Refurbishment Programme 2016-2021 includes the full upgrade and refurbishment of Donegal town Garda Station. I have been informed by the Garda authorities that the OPW has advised that tender documents are currently being prepared. It is expected that the project will be tendered for in early Q3 2018.

Regarding future personnel levels at the station, it should be noted that the Garda Commissioner is responsible for the distribution of resources, including personnel, among the various Garda Divisions and, as Minister, I have no direct role in the matter. I am informed that Garda management keeps the distribution of resources under continual review in the context of crime trends and policing priorities so as to ensure that the optimum use is made of these resources.

In relation to Glenties Garda Station and in particular its former status as District headquarters, it should be noted that such designation or status is a matter for the office of Deputy Commissioner Policing & Security, in conjunction with District and Divisional Officers, having regard to the policing requirements of Glenties and the surrounding communities. As Minister I have no role in the matter.

More generally, the Deputy will also be aware that the Garda Síochána Inspectorate, at the request of the Policing Authority, is carrying out a review of the dispersal and use of resources available to An Garda Síochána in the delivery of policing services to local communities. The Authority has informed the Inspectorate that the review should take account of:

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

It is expected that the review will be completed within the first half of 2018.

I am informed by the Garda Commissioner that, as of the 30 April 2018, the latest date for which figures are available, the strength of the Donegal Division was 394. 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.

I can assure the House that the Government is committed to ensuring a strong and visible police presence throughout the country in order to maintain and strengthen community engagement, provide reassurance to citizens and to deter crime. To make this a reality for all, the Government has in place a plan for an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 personnel by 2021,

including 15,000 Garda members.

Real, tangible progress has been made towards this goal. Garda numbers, taking account of projected retirements, increased to 13,551 at the end of 2017 - a net increase of over 600 since the end of 2016.

The Deputy will be aware that in 2010 a previous government closed the Garda College and imposed a moratorium - the measures imposed at that time had a negative impact on Garda numbers across all Divisions and the legacy of these decisions continues to have consequences for policing. When it had brought about an early exit from the bailout and stabilized the public finances, in September 2014 the then Government reopened the College and since then just under 1,800 recruits have attested as members of An Garda Síochána and are performing main-stream duties nationwide, 32 of whom have been assigned to the Donegal Division.

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. Taking account of projected retirements, reaching a strength of 15,000 by 2021 will require some 1,600 more Garda members to be recruited on a phased basis over the next two years. This is an ambitious programme of accelerated recruitment. To ensure a continuous pipeline of candidates a new recruitment drive was launched by the Commissioner last week with a closing date of 6 June. The competition is being undertaken by the Public Appointment Service on behalf of the Commissioner and applications should be made to www.publicjobs.ie.

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 in March. 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. We are now rebuilding the organisation and providing the Commissioner with the resources needed to deploy increasing numbers of Gardaí. Undoubtedly, the ongoing recruitment process will support all Garda activities and enhance visibility within our communities and will enable the Commissioner to provide additional resources across every Garda division, including the Donegal Division, as new Garda recruits continue to come on stream.

Internet Safety

77. **Deputy Eamon Ryan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the ramifications of setting the digital age of consent at 16 years of age; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22702/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The position is that Article 8 of the GDPR specifies a 'digital age of consent' of 16 years but allows Member States to provide for a lower age, but not below 13 years. It will mean that providers of information society services must make reasonable efforts to obtain the consent of the holder of parental responsibility over the child where such services are offered directly to children below the specified age threshold.

In late 2016, my Department launched a consultation process and invited submissions from interested parties on the digital age of consent to apply in this jurisdiction. The Government Data Forum, which brings together legal and data protection experts, business representatives from SMEs and multinationals, as well as sociologists, psychologists and education specialists, also carried out a consultation process.

A majority of respondents - including the Ombudsman for Children's Office, ISPC, the Children's Rights Alliance, the Internet Safety Advisory Committee - recommended adoption of a digital age of consent of 13 years. Based on the responses received, including those mentioned, the Government decided that 13 years represented an appropriate balancing of children's rights, namely a child's right to participation in the online environment and a child's right to safety and protection. As the Deputy will be aware, these rights are enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Government was also mindful that a digital age of consent of 16 years might prove difficult to enforce, not least because 'tech-savvy' 13, 14 and 15 year olds would have more than sufficient knowledge and IT literacy to enable them to circumvent the requirement for parental consent.

The Special Rapporteur on Child Protection, Dr Geoffrey Shannon, also recommended setting the digital age of consent at 13 years during pre-legislative scrutiny of the draft Data Protection Bill, and that recommendation was endorsed by the Joint Committee in their Report on the Bill in November last.

It is therefore disappointing that in the course of Dáil Report Stage discussion on the Data Protection Bill, an opposition amendment to increase the digital age of consent from 13 years to 16 years was carried. Section 31(1) now provides that digital age of consent shall be 16 years. However, subsection(3) of section 31 provides for a review of the age set out in subsection (1) within 3 years of the coming into force of the Bill.

In the case of children below the digital age of consent, Article 8(2) of the GDPR requires providers of information society services to make "reasonable efforts" to verify that consent is given or authorised by the holder of parental responsibility over the child, taking into consideration available technology. The Data Protection Commission will be responsible for the supervision and enforcement of this provision and the Commissioner will give consideration as to how this can be achieved, given the difficulties I have mentioned above.

Taoiseach's Meetings and Engagements

78. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach if he has spoken or met with Prime Minister Viktor Orbán to discuss Brexit and its implications for Ireland; and if they discussed other matters. [22573/18]

The Taoiseach: I last met with Prime Minister Viktor Orbán on the 4 January 2018 and reported extensively on this meeting in the Dáil on the 31 January 2018. I have not met with him formally since then, although we both attended the Informal EU Summit and High Level Conference on the Sahel in Brussels in February, the March European Council and the EU-Western Balkans Summit in Sofia last week.

Departmental Contracts

79. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Taoiseach his views on the number of contracts his Department and State agencies under his aegis hold with a company (details supplied) in view

of its recent announcement regarding the need to raise an emergency €700 million; and if contingency plans are in place if the company were to collapse. [21666/18]

80. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Taoiseach if he is satisfied that all contracts a company (details supplied) holds with his Department and State agencies under his aegis have been tendered for; if his attention has been drawn to contracts awarded to the company that have not been tendered for; and if his attention has been further drawn to contracts awarded to the company that have rolled over. [21667/18]

The Taoiseach: I propose to take Questions Nos. 79 and 80 together.

My Department has no contracts with the company in question. The National Economic and Social Development Office (NESDO) is the only body under the remit of my Department, and it has no contracts with the company in question either.

Defence Forces Training

81. **Deputy Pat Casey** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the safety measures that are taken in the firing ranges used by Defence Forces in west County Wicklow; the road safety issues associated with same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22766/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): I have been advised by the Defence Forces that in relation to the Department's lands at the Glen of Imaal, prior to a Military shoot being conducted the following procedures take place:

- Site reconnaissance
- Document preparation which includes Safety Trace, Time specific risk assessment, Range Action Safety plan.
- OIC (Officer in Command Briefing) – Minimum rank of Captain
- RSO (Range Safety Officer briefing) – Minimum rank of Sgt
- Personnel acting as OIC and RSO will have been given a detailed 45 min Safety and Duties presentation by Glen Staff.
- On the day of a shoot there are also a minimum of 4 and up to a maximum of 8 sentries deployed in order to inform public about the live firing and to inform them that certain routes have been closed for the duration of the shoot under Section 274 of the Defence Acts.

In addition, there are also permanent warning signs in place. To supplement this on the day of a shoot, there are additional signs placed, along with signs on each access point on to the range. There are also flags placed at locations around the range, the flying of red flags indicates live fire is taking place. There is an inner cordon and outer cordon which will alert any passers-by of the fact there is live firing taking place. All of this is supplemented with patrols of the local area in order to ensure there are no encroachments on to the range.

In relation to road safety Defence Force vehicles are instructed to adhere to speed limits and also to give way to civilian traffic. Every effort is made to liaise with locals to listen to any issues they may have and to resolve them by limiting traffic on certain routes at certain times. All signage around the range boundary was replaced very recently and is in line with best international practice. These signs contain images, a legend, a map, contact details for Defence Forces duty location at the Range Information Centre which is manned during a shoot. Under

the provisions of Section 274 of the Defence Act the Officer in Charge may temporarily stop all traffic by land or water in that area or the vicinity of that place so far as in his opinion may be necessary for the security of life and the proper conduct of the manoeuvres of such practices.

In addition to the measures outlined above my Department throughout the year places advertisements in the main national and local Wicklow newspapers which give a general warning around military firing ranges and advising that red flags indicate live firing. These notices are published prior to the Bank Holiday weekends from March through to August. A similar advertisement is placed in the Heritage Guide every year which relates specifically to the Glen of Imaal.

Dublin-Monaghan Bombings

82. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he raised the Houses of the Oireachtas motions calling on the British Government to allow access by an independent judicial figure to all original documents in its possession relating to the Dublin and Monaghan bombings with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. [22784/18]

84. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade when he or his officials last raised with the British Government the Houses of the Oireachtas motions calling on the British Government to allow access by an independent judicial figure to all original documents in its possession relating to the Dublin and Monaghan bombings; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22770/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): I propose to take Questions Nos. 82 and 84 together.

Last week marked the 44th anniversary of the Dublin Monaghan bombings, which saw the biggest loss of life in a single day during the Troubles. The Government was represented at the wreath-laying ceremony on 17 May to mark the anniversary of these tragic events by my colleague the Minister for Justice and Equality, Charles Flanagan T.D.

The Programme for a Partnership Government highlights the priority that the Government attaches to the implementation of the All-Party Dáil motions relating to the Dublin and Monaghan bombings. I recently met with Justice for the Forgotten to hear their views and update them on the Government's continuing engagement on legacy issues, including with the British Government on the Dáil motions.

The All-Party motion on the 1974 Dublin Monaghan bombings that was adopted by the Dáil on 25 May 2016 has, like those adopted in 2008 and 2011, been conveyed to the British Government. These motions call on the British Government to allow access by an independent, international judicial figure to all original documents relating to the Dublin and Monaghan bombings, as well as the Dublin bombings of 1972 and 1973, the bombing of Kay's Tavern in Dundalk and the murder of Seamus Ludlow.

The Government is committed to actively pursuing the implementation of these all-Party Dáil motions, and has consistently raised the issue with the British Government.

I am actively engaged with the British Government on an ongoing basis on this issue, as are officials from my Department. I recently raised the issue directly with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland Karen Bradley on 16 April last and my officials are in regular contact with their British counterparts on this issue.

I have consistently underlined to the British Government that the Dáil motions represent the consensus political view in Ireland that an independent, international judicial review of all the relevant documents is required to establish the full facts of the Dublin-Monaghan atrocities. I have also advised that the absence of a response from the British Government is of deep concern to the Government and indeed this House, and I have emphasised the urgent need for such a response.

The Government will continue to engage with the British Government on the request in relation to the Dublin-Monaghan bombings, and pursue all possible avenues that could achieve progress on this issue, consistent with the request made by this House.

Middle East Issues

83. **Deputy Pat Casey** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade his views on the human rights violations that have taken place in Gaza, Palestine, in recent weeks; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22740/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): I refer the Deputy to my reply to Question No 31 on 15 May on this topic, and also to my address to a Topical Issues debate on 9 May and my more detailed statement during Statements on Palestine on 15 May, all dealing specifically with this issue. A central element of my response in those contributions was to call for an independent and transparent investigation of the events in Gaza.

Further to those remarks, at my instruction Ireland co-sponsored a motion at the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva, calling for a Special Session of the Council to discuss these events. At that Special Session on 18 May Ireland supported a resolution which inter-alia provided for the establishment of an independent Commission of Inquiry into what happened and why. Ireland does not currently sit on the Council and so did not have a vote. The resolution was adopted and the Commission will now be established.

Question No. 84 answered with Question No. 82.

Brexit Negotiations

85. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he has spoken to his EU counterparts regarding the EU-UK possible framework for the future discussions published by the European Commission task force on 15 May 2018. [22570/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): I continue to engage intensively with my EU counterparts and with the EU Taskforce on Brexit on the ongoing Brexit negotiations, including the framework for the future EU-UK relationship. This included my attendance on 14 May at the General Affairs Council (Article 50), at which Michel Barnier updated the EU27 Member States on the current state of play in the negotiations. The document to which the Deputy refers is a slide used by Mr Barnier during the course of his presentation, providing a visual representation of how key elements of the future EU-UK relationship identified in the EU Guidelines might be advanced and the governance frameworks that would underpin them.

Ireland has always been clear that we want the closest possible relationship between the EU and the UK and so I welcome the confirmation in the March European Council Guidelines of the EU's determination to have as close as possible a partnership with the UK in the future.

These Guidelines also confirmed the EU's readiness to start work towards a balanced, ambitious and wide-ranging free trade agreement (FTA). While an FTA is not Ireland's preferred end goal, we recognise that the European Council has to take into account the repeatedly stated positions of the UK, including its wish to leave the Single Market and Customs Union, which limit the depth of the future partnership.

Nevertheless, the EU will enter negotiations on the future relationship with an open, positive and constructive mind, which will be important should the UK's position evolve during the negotiations.

Ireland also shares the EU view that any future agreement must have the correct balance of rights and obligations, and that the integrity of the Single Market must be preserved. This is in Ireland's fundamental interests as membership of the Single Market is a core element of our economic strategy. Furthermore, the Government will continue to be firm in arguing that any agreement must protect key sectors of the Irish economy given the unique circumstances on the island of Ireland and importance of our economic relationship with the UK.

The European Council guidelines also confirm that the EU's future partnership with the UK will cover not just trade and economic cooperation but also other important areas, in particular the fight against terrorism and international crime, as well as security, defence and foreign policy.

The aim of the current negotiations is to agree alongside the EU-UK withdrawal agreement a framework for the future relations. This is because the actual agreement on a future relationship can only be finalised and concluded once the UK has become a third country, after it leaves the EU on 29 March 2019. The framework will set the objectives and scope of the detailed negotiations leading to legally binding future relationship agreement or agreements. This is why a status quo transitional arrangement is so important and so I welcome the conditional agreement reached in March on an orderly transition period. Of course, it is in the interest of everyone that a future relationship agreement is concluded as quickly as possible after the UK leaves the EU to provide certainty sooner rather than later.

Tax Credits

86. **Deputy Pat Casey** asked the Minister for Finance the impact of the section 481 tax break on the film industry and job promotion here by region; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22764/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Section 481 Taxes Consolidation Act 1997 provides that companies which make films in Ireland can avail of a refundable tax credit in respect of eligible expenditure incurred on the making of that film.

Eligible expenditure includes amounts incurred on employing individuals and on acquiring goods and services from Irish businesses. Both aspects must relate to work done in the State, i.e. employees must perform their duties in the State and goods and services must be used up in the State.

The Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht must approve the film as relating either to Irish culture, or acting as a stimulus to film making in the State through, amongst other things, the provision of quality employment and training opportunities (Regulation 7(a) and (b) Film Regulations 2015). The Minister can require that the film company engage a certain number of trainees for the making of the film.

It is not possible to track the impact of the credit by regions as, for example, the company claiming the credit may be based in Dublin but the filming may take place in Cork. It is also not possible to separate s.481 supported projects from other projects undertaken by the same film companies (e.g. smaller projects, advertising, etc.). However the Deputy may wish to note that details of the companies who have received the film tax credit are published on the Revenue website at: <http://www.revenue.ie/en/companies-and-charities/reliefs-and-exemptions/film-relief/beneficiaries-of-film-relief.aspx>, and this includes reference to the Revenue territorial unit relevant to the claimant.

Tax Data

87. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Finance the estimated amount of tax that would be due on the import of vehicles (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22788/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am advised by Revenue that tractors imported from outside the EU are liable to the standard rate of VAT of 23%, and Customs Duty, which can vary from 0% to 16%, depending on the type of tractor being imported. The amount of tax and duty payable at importation will depend on the value of the vehicles.

Flood Prevention Measures

88. **Deputy Pat Casey** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the measures being taken to reinforce the Arklow coastal flood defences in view of the recent and ongoing damage to them; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22780/18]

89. **Deputy Pat Casey** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the measures being taken to enhance the coastal protection works at the Murrough, Wicklow town, in view of the potential for severe flooding and erosion; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22781/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran): I propose to take Questions Nos. 88 and 89 together.

In relation to coastal protection/erosion generally, it is a matter in the first instance for local authorities to identify and prioritise problems along their coastlines and, if a viable solution is available, they may undertake works using their own resources or, if necessary, apply for funding under the OPW Minor Works Scheme.

The OPW operates the Minor Flood Mitigation Works and Coastal Protection Scheme, under which applications for funding from local authorities are considered for measures costing up to €750,000 in each instance. Funding for coastal erosion risk management studies may also be applied for under this scheme. Funding of up to 90% of the cost is available for projects which meet the eligibility criteria including a requirement that the proposed measures are cost beneficial.

The OPW has published guidelines for coastal erosion risk management measures and funding applications under the Minor Flood Mitigation Works and Coastal Protection Scheme, available on the OPW website at <https://www.opw.ie>.

The OPW has already provided considerable funding support to Wicklow County Council in relation to protecting the North and South beaches at Arklow and the Murrough, Wicklow

town.

Funding of €70,000 was approved in 2010 under the Minor Works scheme for proposed capital works to strengthen the existing revetment structure at Arklow north beach. Funding of €42,600 was approved under the Minor Works scheme in 2015 to undertake strengthening work on a coastal embankment at Arklow south beach. Wicklow County Council also submitted an application for funding under the Minor Works scheme for proposed works at Arklow north beach originally in 2016 and then with 2 revised versions of this application in 2017. The application was for proposed maintenance works to an existing revetment (rock armour structure). The OPW advised the Council that the application could not be approved because the proposal did not meet certain criteria of the scheme including the cost benefit criteria of the scheme. The Council was also advised that it may be more appropriate for it to seek funding for a detailed coastal erosion and flood risk management study to better understand the coastal processes involved in the wider region and to inform any further applications for funding for works. No further application has been received to date.

In March 2016 the OPW approved funding of €450,000 to Wicklow County Council to carry out emergency coastal protection works at the Murrough in Wicklow town. Works have been completed and all funding has been drawn down. No further application has been submitted for works at this location.

I visited the areas myself earlier this year and I am familiar with the issues. The OPW will continue to work constructively with Wicklow County Council on this matter and to provide advice and assistance to the Council as required.

Community Employment Schemes Supervisors

90. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the number of times the community sector high level forum or working group has met; if it has considered the issue of pensions for community employment scheme supervisors in recent months; if it has identified a pathway to an appropriate solution regarding pensions for supervisors; if there is a timeline in place for the review group to finish its deliberation or to come to a decision on the issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22787/18]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I would refer the Deputy to my response to PQ 54985/17 of 16 January 2018.

Office of Public Works Projects

91. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if the OPW will carry out works (details supplied) in County Limerick; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22845/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran): The Office of Public Works (OPW) does undertake vegetation management of the river referred to by the Deputy where the flow is obstructed thereby affecting the conveyance capacity of the channel. Where the OPW is aware of rubbish in this River it liaises with the Local Authority or other relevant statutory authorities in relation to its removal.

School Accommodation

92. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of an application by a school (details supplied) for an additional classroom; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22729/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I wish to advise the Deputy that my Department received an application for the provision of additional accommodation at the school referred to in respect of both classroom and ancillary accommodation. The application is currently under consideration and my Department will be in direct contact with the school authorities when the assessment process has concluded.

School Services Staff

93. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason his Department does not employ school secretaries (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22817/18]

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

Where a school uses the capitation grant funding to employ a secretary, such staff are employees of individual schools. My Department has no plans to develop an alternative scheme for schools to employ secretaries separate to the current system of capitation grant assistance.

Notwithstanding that, in 2015 my Department agreed to engage with the union side in relation to the pay of school secretaries and caretakers who are employed using grant funding and to enter an arbitration process. The Arbitrator recommended a cumulative pay increase of 10% between 2016 and 2019 for school secretaries and caretakers comprehended by the terms of the arbitration process and that a minimum hourly pay rate of €13 for such staff be phased in over the period 2016 to 2019. Grant funding used by schools to fund the salaries of ancillary staff is also being improved on a phased basis between 2016 and 2019 following the arbitration process. These increases are in order to enable schools implement the arbitration outcome for grant funded secretaries and caretakers and to also implement the restoration of salary for cleaners arising from the unwinding of FEMPI legislation.

In December 2017, my Department published circular letter 0078/2017 for primary schools and circular letter 0079/2017 for voluntary secondary schools, setting out the application of the third phase increases of the Arbitrator's recommendations. The circulars are available at:

Circular 0078/2017: https://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/cl0078_2017.pdf

Circular 0079/2017: http://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/cl0079_2017.pdf

The increases recommended by the Arbitrator are binding and must be applied by all schools who employ staff to whom the Arbitrator's recommendation applies.

Teachers' Remuneration

94. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if the estimated full year cost of restoring all allowances to new entrant teachers which were abolished in 2012 and 2013 has been collated; if so, the details of same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22838/18]

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

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

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

As part of the public service-wide review of allowances, the Government withdrew qualification allowances for new teachers altogether. As a result of the September 2016 Agreement with Unions, revised salary scales which include the Honours Primary Degree allowance have been applied from 1 January 2018 to teachers recruited since 1 January 2011. A registered teacher now commences on an annual salary of over €35,950 under the Public Service Stability Agreement 2018 - 2020. The starting salary for a registered teacher commencing teaching for the first time in October 2020 will be €37,600.

The annual cost of restoring the H.Dip allowance is estimated at €7 million.

The annual cost of restoring allowances to new entry teachers in Primary, Voluntary Secondary and Community and Comprehensive schools would be in the region of €1.07m, comprised of €0.43m to restore the Gaeltacht Allowance, €0.62m to restore the Teaching through Irish allowance and €0.02m to restore the Island Allowance (Primary only).

The annual cost of restoring the Secretary to the Board of Management allowance is estimated at €1m. However, this allowance is not payable to new entrants on the commencement of their teaching career, it is payable to Principals who act as Secretary to the Board of Management. There is a minimum service requirement before teachers are appointed to the post of Principal and accordingly it would be a number of years before the full cost of that allowance would be payable.

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

Junior Cycle Reform

95. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the arrangements for provision of extra hours allocated to schools for junior cycle implementation for the school year 2018-19, in view of the fact that not all schools had permanent leadership posts restored; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22839/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): In recognition of the fact

that the introduction of the Framework for Junior Cycle 2015 has implications for school leaders, extra hours were allocated to schools with effect from 2016 on an interim basis pending the restoration of leadership posts in schools to help with the facilitation of this additional work.

The position in relation to the school year 2018/19 will be considered in the context of Circular 3/2018.

Teachers' Remuneration

96. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans regarding the new entrant pay issue and related commitments of September 2016 to resolve or address the issue of the payment of the higher diploma allowance to second level teachers in view of the fact that it is a two year course, the costs of the course and that teachers cannot teach without it; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22840/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The withdrawal of the Higher Diploma in Education allowance in 2012 following the public service-wide allowances review was one of a number of measures taken by the Government to stabilise the public finances.

The public service agreements have allowed a programme of pay restoration for public servants to start. I, together with my colleague the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, negotiated a 15-22% pay increase for new teachers. The agreements to date have restored an estimated 75% of the difference in pay for more recently recruited teachers and deliver convergence of the pay scales at later points in the scale.

As a result of these changes, the current starting salary of a new teacher is €35,958 and from 1 October 2020 onwards will be €37,692.

To have gone further than the pay increases that have been negotiated for 2018 would mean I would have had less money available to hire over 1,000 extra SNAs and over 1,000 extra teachers.

Differential pay scales were introduced by the then Government in 2010. It must be borne in mind that the pay reduction for post-2011 entrants applied to all public servants and not just teachers, and that any restoration of these measures in respect of teachers would be expected to be applied elsewhere across the public service.

In accordance with the Public Service Pay and Pensions Act 2017, the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform recently laid before the Oireachtas a report on the matter of the pay of new entrants to the public service. The report assesses the cost of a further change which would provide a two scale point adjustment to new entrants recruited since 2011. The total cost of such an adjustment across the public sector is of the order of €200 million, of which Education accounts for €83 million. The report also acknowledges that during the financial crisis there were policy changes which affected remuneration in different occupations across the public sector (including education). Addressing any issues arising from changes which are not specifically detailed in the report would give rise to additional costs over and above the foregoing figures.

Any further negotiation on new entrant pay is a cross sectoral issue, not just an issue for the education sector. The Government also supports the gradual, negotiated repeal of the FEMPI legislation, having due regard to the priority to improve public services and in recognition of the essential role played by public servants.

The Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform's report will inform discussion on remaining salary scale issues with the parties to the Public Service Stability Agreement 2018-2020 in accordance with the commitment in the Agreement to consider the issue of newly qualified pay. That process commenced with a first meeting on 12 October 2017. The three teacher unions attended that first meeting. Further talks began on the 27th of April with all public service unions in relation to new entrant pay. I understand that further engagement is being arranged for early June as the parties continue to work through the various aspects of this issue.

The issue of the allowance is also on the agenda of the Teachers Conciliation Council, which is the recognised forum for dealing with claims relating to pay and terms of employment of teachers.

Schools Refurbishment

97. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of a school refurbishment (details supplied) in County Westmeath; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22867/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The project at the school to which the Deputy refers is progressing and the research and design stages are substantially complete as is the tender documentation. Currently pre-tender cost estimates are being finalised in compliance with my Department's Design Team Procedures and public procurement requirements.

The Pre-Qualification stage has also been completed and suitably qualified contractors have been selected. On this basis, my Department expects the project to be able to proceed to tender this coming July.

Special Educational Needs

98. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if the process for children with intellectual disabilities transitioning out of second level education will be reassessed; his views on new measures to implement an earlier programme of transition via a pilot rehabilitative training transition programme between the HSE and the National Council for Special Education; his further views on a comprehensive programme of career guidance services within the educational system for young persons with special needs who leave the special school system; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22870/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Transitions at all stages and levels including starting school; the move from primary to post-primary school; moving between mainstream and special school settings and preparation for life after school can be a difficult time for all parents and students, including those with special educational needs.

My Department has committed itself to a range of actions aimed at supporting effective transition from school to further or higher education and adult disability services, in order to ensure that students with disabilities can be supported to plan for their futures. This requires information on the options and supports, as well as ensuring schools, families, other Government Departments and Agencies work together to ensure the needs of students can be reasonably met.

My Department, together with the NCSE, SOLAS, Education and Training Boards (ETBs), HSE, Department of Employment Affairs & Social Protection among others have key roles to

play in delivering on various actions to enable achievement of key strategic priorities, including transition from school to further or higher education and adult disability services.

The context of the proposal to develop a Rehabilitative Training Transition Programme between NCSE and HSE stems from a review of the HSE's current Rehabilitation Programme.

The outcome from that review pointed to the benefits of having a joint NCSE/Rehabilitative Training Transition programme for young people due to leave school and whose needs would indicate the need for Rehabilitative Training or a HSE funded day service. The development of such a programme would lead to a more seamless transition from one service to another and better prepare the young person for the significant transition from school to adult services and from childhood to adulthood.

I am pleased that a meeting between NCSE and HSE will be convened shortly to discuss how this might be advanced.

The Career Guidance Review, which is currently underway, is examining existing career guidance tools and career information for all post-primary/further education/higher education students and adults, currently in place across the education and training system in Ireland.

Departmental Contracts

99. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he is satisfied that all contracts a company (details supplied) holds with his Department and State agencies under his aegis have been tendered for; if his attention has been drawn to contracts awarded to the company that have not been tendered for; if his attention has been further drawn to contracts awarded to the company that have rolled over; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21667/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I wish to confirm to the Deputy that the information sought cannot be provided in the time allowed. As soon as the information has been collated I will write to the Deputy on the matter.

Crime Investigation

100. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his views on the establishment of a historical investigation unit here to deal with legacy issues; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21107/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will appreciate, the investigation of crime is a matter for An Garda Síochána and the Garda Commissioner is responsible for the deployment of all Garda resources, including personnel. I have no role in such matters.

I have been advised by the Garda authorities that in general terms responsibility for the investigation of criminal offences resides in the first instance with the Superintendent of the District where the offence was committed.

The Garda National Bureau of Criminal Investigation, under the command of the Assistant Commissioner for Special Crime Operations, holds a national investigative remit and it is specialised in the area of major crime investigation. It undertakes and supports investigations on the direction of the Garda Commissioner.

The support provided includes using the expertise of the Serious Crime Review Team (SCRT) which was established in 2007 to provide independent review of historical investigations, including homicides. The purpose of a review conducted by the SCRT is to assist the Senior Investigating Officer with the criminal investigation. Such review is an independent examination of evidence and other material, gathered during investigation and to ensure that it conforms to approved standards; that the investigation has been thorough, conducted with integrity and objectivity; and to identify further investigative opportunities.

The range of other bureaux within Special Crime Operations support major investigations at a national level depending on the category of crime under investigation.

The investigation of terrorist-related offences falls under the remit of the Special Detective Unit under the command of Assistant Commissioner, Security and Intelligence. Other services within An Garda Síochána, such as the Analysis Service or the Technical Bureau, also provide support and assistance in the investigation and review of serious crimes.

The Deputy can be assured that in circumstances where historic, troubles-related offences have not been resolved, the investigations remain open and the Garda Authorities will and do follow up fully on any new evidence or information that becomes available to them, whether that comes from the public, from other police services or from their own investigations.

Garda Deployment

101. **Deputy Pat Casey** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the roles, rank and number of gardaí and civilian personnel in the Wicklow district in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22765/18]

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.

As the Deputy will be aware the Wicklow District forms part of the Wicklow Division. I am informed by the Commissioner that on 30 April 2018, the latest date for which figures are readily available, the strength of the Wicklow Division was 305, of whom 92 were assigned to the Wicklow District. There are also 20 Garda Reserves and 27 civilians attached to the Division. When appropriate, the work of local Gardaí is supported by a number of Garda national units such as the National Bureau of Criminal Investigation, the 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 31 have been assigned to the Wicklow 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 in March. Further, Garda numbers, taking account of projected retirements, are on track to reach 14,000 by the end of this year.

Taking account of projected retirements, reaching a strength of 15,000 by 2021 will require some 1,600 more Garda members to be recruited on a phased basis over the next two years. This is an ambitious programme of accelerated recruitment. To ensure a continuous pipeline of candidates a new recruitment drive was launched by the Commissioner last week with a closing date of 6 June. The competition is being undertaken by the Public Appointment Service on behalf of the Commissioner and applications should be made to www.publicjobs.ie.

In addition to the investment in more Gardaí, 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 Wicklow Division.

For the Deputy's information I have set out in the following tables the number of Gardaí by rank and civilian personnel assigned to the Wicklow District on 30 April 2018, the latest date for which figures are currently available.

Wicklow District Garda Strength as of 30 April 2018

DIS-DISTRICT	Garda	Sergeant	Inspector	Superintendent	Chief Superintendent	Assistant Commissioner	Total
WICKLOW	77	12	2	1			92

Wicklow District Civilian Strength as of 30 April 2018

DISTRICT	EO	CO	Total
WICKLOW	1	8	9

Human Trafficking

102. **Deputy Mick Barry** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the reason he has not responded to correspondence from the International Transport Federation of 29 March 2018 and 26 April 2018 regarding the trafficking of fishers in the Irish fishing fleet; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22767/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by officials of my Department that the correspondence referred to by the Deputy has been acknowledged and that officials are examining same and a response will issue within the time lines provided.

The Atypical Scheme for Sea Fishers was established as a cross Departmental response to address the matter of non-EEA workers on certain categories of vessels in the Irish fishing fleet. A number of Departments are involved in the scheme and it is monitored by an Oversight Committee, chaired by the Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine with members from relevant Departments and State Agencies.

The application process includes the drawing up of a contract which includes, for example, payment of wages in line with the minimum wage, that the medical needs of the employee must be provided for by the employer and when an employment is terminated the employer must repatriate the employee to their home country.

This contract, prepared by a solicitor practising in the State on behalf of the employer, is submitted in the first instance to the Central Depository administered by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and thereafter an application is made to the Irish Naturalisation & Immigration Service of my Department for an immigration permission.

Any abuses or otherwise of the employment conditions of any non-EEA National in the Irish fishing industry is a matter for the Workplace Relations Commission, the Marine Survey Office, the Gardaí and other appropriate authorities of the State.

My Department does not comment on correspondence it receives with third parties but any changes to the Atypical Working Scheme for fishermen will be a matter for the Oversight group to consider in the first instance and would also require the approval of Government.

Courts Service Data

103. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the average waiting time to have cases brought before all courts in each of the past three years in tabular form. [22790/18]

114. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the extent to which an adequate number of judges are being appointed to the various courts in order to minimise delays; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22827/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 103 and 114 together.

As the Deputy will be aware, under the provisions of the Courts Service Act 1998, management of the courts is the responsibility of the Courts Service, which is independent in exercising its functions. Furthermore, the scheduling of court cases and the allocation of court business is a matter for the Presidents of the Courts and the presiding judges who are, under the Constitution, independent in the exercise of their judicial functions.

However, in order to be of assistance to the Deputy, I have had enquiries made and the Courts Service has advised that, in general, waiting times are being maintained or reduced across jurisdictions. The Presidents of the Courts keep waiting times under ongoing review. The Courts Service continues to work with the Presidents and the judiciary to improve waiting times and, where specific issues are identified, resources are targeted at areas of greatest need. Additional sittings are arranged where necessary and possible within resources available.

The Courts Service has further advised that delays in the hearing of cases can occur for a number of reasons, many of which are outside the control of the Courts and the Courts Service, for example, the unavailability of a witness or vital evidence, delays in the furnishing of reports

or because the parties and/or legal practitioners are not ready to proceed on allocated dates. This gives rise to adjournments which can have a major impact on the time taken to complete the hearing of a case and on the number of cases which can be disposed of in a court sitting. Increased volumes of cases coming before the courts, increased complexity of cases, leading to longer hearing times, and new areas of litigation can also impact on waiting times.

Tables outlining the waiting times in each court at December 2015, 2016 and 2017 can be found at the link at the end of this reply. The Courts Service has informed me that waiting times refer to the time taken from when a case is indicated as ready to proceed and it coming before the court. The average waiting times for the various courts for 2015 and 2016 are provided in the Courts Service Annual Reports and the average waiting times for 2017 will be published in the 2017 Annual Report.

As the Deputy will be aware, judicial appointments are made by the President acting on the advice of the Government in accordance with articles 13.9 and 35.1 of the Constitution. The following number of judicial appointments have been made since 2015 to fill vacancies and implement legislative changes to judicial numbers:

2015 - 15

2016 - 11

2017 - 16

2018 to date - 5

The Government endeavours to ensure that all judicial vacancies at all jurisdictional levels are filled as quickly as possible. Judicial resources available to the courts are kept under ongoing review and applications for additional judicial resources from the Chief Justice and the Presidents of the Courts are fully considered to ensure that the courts have adequate judicial resources.

Furthermore, as the Deputy may be aware, a Group to review the administration of civil justice in the State, chaired by the President of the High Court Mr. Justice Peter Kelly, was established in 2017. This Group is to report to me within two years, and will make recommendations for changes with a view to improving access to civil justice in the State, promoting early resolution of disputes, reducing the cost of litigation, creating a more responsive and proportionate system and ensuring better outcomes for court users.

[waiting times]

Criminal Prosecutions Data

104. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of prosecutions taken by An Garda Síochána in respect of unlicensed gaming activity for non-compliance with gaming licensing requirements in each of the years 2014 to 2017 and to date in 2018 in each Garda district in Dublin in tabular form; and the number of those that led to successful convictions. [22793/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I have requested a report from the Garda authorities regarding the information sought by the Deputy and I will contact him directly when the report is to hand.

Gangland Crime

105. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the extent to which the identity of the membership of criminal gangs is known; if such membership can be targeted in order to limit the activity and influence of such gangs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22818/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As I have indicated previously, tackling organised crime activity is a key ongoing priority for both the Government and An Garda Síochána. An Garda Síochána's Policing Plan sets out the priorities of An Garda Síochána in tackling organised crime activity including its continued commitment to pro-actively target groups and individuals engaged in criminal activity, including organised criminal activities.

The Deputy will be aware that significant additional resources have been allocated and deployed by An Garda Síochána in the last few years to target the activities of criminal gangs. In tackling such activity, An Garda Síochána continues to develop and implement operations and strategies aimed at targeting, dismantling and disrupting criminal networks, utilising advanced analytical and intelligence methodologies. Multi-disciplinary approaches are also utilised to ensure the activities of individuals and groups involved in criminal enterprise are effectively targeted, including through the use of the proceeds of crime legislation, money-laundering legislation, the provisions of the Criminal Justice (Amendment) Act 2009 relating to organised crime and the powers of the Criminal Assets Bureau.

While we should not underestimate the difficulties which the Garda authorities face in tackling organised crime activity, we continue to see the significant results of their efforts in the arrests made and persons being brought before the Courts, as well as the ongoing drugs and firearms seizures made.

The question of providing for an offence of membership of a criminal gang, in a manner similar to the approach taken in the Offences Against the State Acts with regard to membership of a proscribed organisation, has arisen from time to time. In this regard, it is important to understand the issues which arise in seeking to simply outlaw membership of a criminal gang in such a manner. Most significant is the fact that a criminal gang is not likely to have the permanency of organisation and structure that a subversive organisation or other more fixed group would have. Relationships in criminal gangs tend to be more fluid with shifting memberships, alliances and a membership which may depend on circumstance.

However, criminal legislation has been updated in recent years, with a view to ensuring that it provides a comprehensive range of provisions for the prosecution and punishment of crime, in particular the activities of those involved in organised crime. Part 7 of the Criminal Justice Act 2006 (as amended by the Criminal Justice (Amendment) Act 2009) establishes a number of offences targeting the activities of those involved in organised crime. These offences include participation in a criminal organisation and directing a criminal organisation. The latter offence specifically targets those in criminal organisations who give the orders without requiring their direct participation in the commission of criminal offences. On conviction, this offence carries a penalty of up to life imprisonment.

The Criminal Justice Act 2006 (as amended) also makes it an offence to conspire with one or more persons to do an act that constitutes a serious offence, irrespective of whether such an act actually takes place or not. Evidential provisions as to the existence of a criminal organisation were introduced aiding prosecution for the offences under the Act. Provision was also introduced so that where a serious offence is committed as part of or in furtherance of a criminal

organisation, it shall be treated as an aggravating factor for the purpose of determining sentence.

Prisoner Data

106. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the extent to which criminal gang members have been offered rehabilitative or educational training while in prison; the number that have had more than one referral for such training; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22819/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I wish to advise the Deputy that the Irish Prison Service provides a wide range of rehabilitative programmes to those in custody that include education, vocational training, healthcare, psychiatric, psychological, counselling, welfare and spiritual services. These programmes can offer purposeful activity to those in custody while serving their sentences and encouraging them to lead law abiding lives on release. These programmes are available in all prisons and all prisoners are eligible to use the services.

The manner in which education and training records are collated does not provide for statistics on the extent to which criminal gang members have been offered rehabilitative or educational training while in prison or the number that have had more than one referral for such training.

Garda Policing Plans

107. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the extent to which the structures of An Garda Síochána are adequate to meet the challenges of modern criminality; his plans to modernise same including the use of technology; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22820/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will be aware 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.

The Government approved a major Five Year Reform and High Level Workforce Plan for An Garda Síochána in July 2016 based on the implementation of the Garda Inspectorate's recommendations contained in its report "Changing Policing in Ireland" in tandem with the delivery of the Government's commitments in relation to increasing the overall Garda workforce. The Commissioner's Modernisation and Renewal Programme 2016-2021 will be the vehicle through which the agreed recommendations of the Inspectorate Report, the bulk of which have been accepted, will be implemented.

The key structural change under the Five Year Reform and High-level Workforce Plan is the replacement of the current District model of policing with a Divisional model where responsibilities will be allocated on a functional rather than geographical basis, subject to modifications to ensure the close relationship with communities is maintained in both urban and rural areas.

The Divisional model is being out on a phased basis starting with a pilot programme. The four Divisions of DMR South Central, Cork City, Galway and Mayo have been selected for the

pilot in order to provide a mix of urban and rural policing environments. This new model will support the more flexible and effective deployment of Garda resources.

It should be noted that the Programme for a Partnership Government recognises that Gardaí must have the modern technology and resources necessary to detect and investigate crimes, and to prevent loss and harm to citizens and their property on a 24/7 basis.

I am informed by the Garda authorities that ICT is recognised as an essential tool for supporting the day-to-day operations of over 16,000 Garda members, Garda reserves and civilian staff. On an annual basis, approximately 13.5 million vehicle registrations are read by the Automated Number Plate Recognition System, 1.9 million records are exchanged electronically with the Court Services, 9.3 million PULSE searches are conducted, 19.5 million TETRA secure digital radio calls are made and 118,000 fingerprints are searched.

The Commissioner's 5-year Modernisation and Renewal Programme 2016-2021 sets out a series of initiatives including those which will enable An Garda Síochána deploy the latest cutting-edge technologies in the fight against crime. In support of this plan, some €342 million, including €217 million under the Capital Plan, is being invested in Garda ICT infrastructure between 2016 and 2021.

In this context, a broad range of ICT projects are being delivered to support existing systems and develop them further, with the overall goal of supporting the ongoing business requirements of An Garda Síochána in all fields.

Some key ICT projects include:

- a new Property & Exhibits Management system, which has been deployed to record all property and exhibits which come into Garda possession and to manage them from scene to court.

- A new e-Vetting system is now operational which provides online processing of applications for Garda vetting for persons working with children and vulnerable persons. This system won the national eGovernment Award for 2017.

- A new Anti-Money Laundering application (GoAML) which supports Financial Intelligence Units to counter Organised Crime and Terrorist Financing and Money Laundering was implemented in June 2017.

- new Enterprise Content Management System, to provide An Garda Síochána with a single enterprise content repository for all documentation and multimedia content created. A pilot of this system has been completed and rollout to all Divisions is currently being progressed.

- Enhancement of the PULSE system, to include Individual Victim Assessment and Victim Engagement screens and to include new functionality to enable Garda supervisors monitor the progress of incidents from initial data input right through to court outcome stage.

- A new Performance, Accountability and Learning Framework System has been developed to support performance assessment and development for all Gardaí. National rollout is currently underway.

- A new system operational since May 2017 enables the electronic capture of the details of all emergency calls to those Garda Divisional control rooms

- A new Intelligence Management System is operational and provides a single secure repository of sensitive intelligence gathered by operational members.

- A project to enhance network access to rural Garda stations is being progressed. Work on this project is well advanced and over 470 stations are now connected to the Garda network.

- A new Crime Investigations Management System is currently being developed and is planned to commence pilot implementation in late 2018. The system will allow for the management of activities completed as part of an investigation, maintain a full history of the chain of events in an investigation, manage information gathered, and decisions/actions taken. It will also integrate closely with the new Document and Content Management System, the new Property and Exhibits Management System, and other Garda IT systems such as PULSE.

- A project to implement a new Rosters and Duty Management System is currently underway. A pilot of the system is planned to commence in the first half of 2018.

- A project to provide mobile access for front line Gardaí, via a smartphone device, to Garda Information Systems including PULSE is currently being advanced. A pilot of the mobile solution is currently in progress in the Limerick Garda Division, which will be evaluated on completion as part of consideration of further rollout.

- Preparatory work is now being completed on a future project intended to implement a new national Computer Aided Dispatch System to manage the capture of the details of all emergency calls and the dispatch of resources to the incident has commenced.

In addition, An Garda Síochána, in collaboration with the Department of Justice and Equality, is actively progressing a number of EU ICT Projects to improve police co-operation and increase border security within the EU Community. These include:

- implementation of the FIND solution which is now operational enabling the Garda National Immigration Bureau to query the Interpol Stolen Lost Travel Document Database (STLD);

- implementation of the PRÜM initiative which delivers enhancements to the Automated Finger Printing System to step up cross-border cooperation in relation to terrorism, crime and illegal immigration; and

- implementation of the Schengen Information System which is planned to be ready for evaluation by the EU Commission by mid 2019 and which will enable the rapid dissemination of information pertaining to organised crime targets and terrorist threats and other subversive and non-subversive crime types across members' states of the European Union.

The investment in resources and reforms being driven by the Modernisation and Renewal Programme will support all Garda activities and enable the Commissioner to deploy the significant resources available to An Garda Síochána to effectively tackle the challenges of modern criminality.

Finally, the Deputy will be aware that the Commission on the Future of Policing in Ireland was established by Government in April 2017 to undertake an independent, comprehensive examination of all aspects of policing including the structures of An Garda Síochána. The Commission is to report by September this year and I look forward to its recommendations.

Prisoner Data

108. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of prisoners incarcerated in high security or moderate security prisons to date; the extent to which the numbers are subject to fluctuation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22821/18]

116. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of males and females serving prison sentences; the degree to which the numbers have fluctuated in the past two years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22829/18]

117. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of prison spaces available in all prisons throughout the country; the number of instances where more than one person shares a cell; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22830/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 108, 116 and 117 together.

As the Deputy is aware the Irish Prison Service collates and publishes the prisoner population breakdown on a daily basis and this information is available on the Irish Prison Service website *www.irishprisons.ie*. This breakdown includes the number of prisoners incarcerated in each prison including Portlaoise Prison, Ireland's only maximum security prison and also provides a breakdown of male and female prisoners. The information can be found in the Information Centre – under Statistics & Information – Daily Prisoner Population.

The Irish Prison Service also collates a quarterly census on cell occupancy and this information is also available on the Irish Prison Service website *www.irishprisons.ie*. The information can be found in the Information Centre – under Statistics & Information – Census Reports.

Immigration Policy

109. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to offer stamp 4 or other residency status to immigrants who have been here for more than five years and have established strong links here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22822/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): Ireland operates a very open immigration system with many legal pathways open to persons who apply to come here in accordance with the immigration laws in place in the State. The purpose for which someone intends to reside in the State determines their immigration status and the specific conditions attached to their permission is reflected in the type of immigration stamp provided.

The Irish Naturalisation & Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department operates a wide range of schemes for various categories of persons, including, international students, workers, business persons, family members and a wide range of other categories such as retirees, volunteers and ministers of religion.

In addition, once a person is in the State on a specific permission, there are a number of ways in which someone, because of changed circumstances may seek to alter their immigration permission. For example, a non-EEA holder of five consecutive employment permits may apply for Long Term Residency subject to eligibility requirements or a non-EEA Critical Skills employment permit holder or Researcher may apply for a similar status after two years. In addition, there are schemes in place for persons who marry or are partners of Irish citizens, etc. The full range of schemes are set-out on the INIS website (*inis.gov.ie*). These schemes are designed to be flexible and to cater for changing circumstances of applicants. Accordingly, there are no plans to introduce a time based scheme along the lines proposed by the Deputy.

Direct Provision Data

110. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of refugees or asylum seekers awaiting a decision on their residency and remaining in direct provision facilities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22823/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): On 31 December 2016, the International Protection Act 2015 (IPA 2015) was commenced, providing for the introduction of a single application procedure for people seeking international protection in the State. The 2015 Act replaces the previous sequential application system with a single application process, for asylum, subsidiary protection and permission to remain in the State. This brings Ireland into line with the processing arrangements applicable in other EU Member States. However, the Act also contained transitional arrangements, which has put further pressures on the processing of applications. The main challenge now faced is the need to quickly process the substantial number of cases on hand many of which were carried over from the previous system.

As of 17 May 2018, there are a total of 3,002 applications for international protection pending in the International Protection Office awaiting a first instance decision, where the applicant is accommodated under the system of direct provision. Over half of these cases are less than one year in the system and 95% are two years or less. This is a major improvement from the situation when the McMahon Working Group reported on the matter in June 2015.

Some 535 of the 3,002 pending applications were made before the commencement of the 2015 Act but were not finalised by the former Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner (ORAC) and the former Refugee Appeals Tribunal (RAT) by that date. These applications reverted to be processed by the IPO under the transitional provisions of the International Protection Act 2015.

Persons who are recognised as refugees or as beneficiaries of subsidiary protection have already had their status determined.

Criminal Legal Aid

111. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans for a review of the criminal legal aid programme with particular reference to its application to repeat offenders; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22824/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy is aware the Criminal Legal Aid Scheme is a vital element of the criminal justice system. The Criminal Justice (Legal Aid) Act 1962 provides that free legal aid may be granted in certain circumstances for the defence of persons of insufficient means in criminal proceedings. Under the 1962 Act, the courts, through the judiciary, are responsible for the granting of legal aid. An applicant must establish to the satisfaction of the court that their means are insufficient to enable them to pay for legal representation themselves. The court must also be satisfied that, by reason of the “gravity of the charge” or “exceptional circumstances”, it is essential in the interests of justice that the applicant should have legal aid. An applicant’s previous convictions are not a criterion for access to legal aid under the Act. I have no function in these matters which are determined by the judiciary.

These provisions must have regard to the right to a fair trial, including the provision of legal aid where appropriate, which is a Constitutional right upheld by the courts in a number of judgments. The Supreme Court ruling in the case of *State (Healy) v Donoghue* [1976]I.R. 325 effectively determined that the right to criminal legal aid is, in circumstances which are quite wide in practice, a Constitutional right. Article 6(3)(c) of the European Convention on Human

Rights states that “Everyone charged with a criminal offence has [the right] to defend himself in person or through legal assistance of his own choosing or, if he has not sufficient means to pay for legal assistance, to be given it free when the interests of justice so require”. As the Deputy will be aware, an accused person is entitled to a presumption of innocence and legal representation and any obstacles to obtaining necessary legal aid which were found to be unreasonable could give a defendant an avenue for appeal or prohibition of the prosecution. The overriding concern is to ensure that no risk arises in relation to the prosecution of persons charged with criminal offences before the courts.

My Department is preparing a draft General Scheme of a Criminal Justice (Legal Aid) Bill, the key purpose of which is to transfer the administration of the Criminal Legal Aid Scheme to the Legal Aid Board and to give effect to Government Programme commitments in respect of criminal legal aid, including introducing a more rigorous and objective means testing system for criminal legal aid, provision for contributions, and new sanctions. It is my intention to seek approval of Government for the General Scheme of the Bill and submit it to the Oireachtas for pre-legislative scrutiny as early as is practicable.

Community Policing

112. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the extent to which local or community policing is likely to develop throughout County Kildare in the foreseeable future; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22825/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): 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 Districts, and I, as Minister, have no direct role in the matter. I can assure the Deputy that Garda management keeps this distribution of resources under continual review in the context of crime trends and policing priorities so as to ensure that optimum use is made of these resources.

I am informed by the Commissioner that the Garda strength of the Kildare Division on 30 April 2018, the latest date for which figures are currently available, was 365 Gardaí with 19 Garda Reserves and 30 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. 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 85 have been assigned to the Kildare Division.

The Deputy will be aware that the Government has, in its Programme for a Partnership Government, recognised the importance of community policing. It commits the Government to ensuring visible, effective and responsive policing in every community throughout the country in order to provide reassurance to citizens and prevent crime. This commitment is underlined by very significant investments in Garda resources.

In addition to an allocation of almost €100 million for Garda overtime to support anti-crime operations in 2018, the Government’s Capital Plan 2016 – 2021 also provides for significant resourcing of An Garda Síochána. Some €46 million was allocated for investment in the Garda fleet to ensure that An Garda Síochána has a modern, effective and fit for purpose fleet. This is in addition to the investment of almost €30 million in the fleet in the period 2013 to 2015. In total in the period 2013 to end of 2017 almost €44 million will have been invested in the fleet

with some 2,000 vehicles coming on stream in that period.

Some €330 million, including €205 million under the Capital Plan, is being invested in Garda ICT infrastructure between 2016 and 2021. This major investment will allow An Garda Síochána to deploy the latest cutting edge technologies in the fight against crime and will facilitate progress on important reforms arising from the Garda Inspectorate's report on Crime Investigation.

An Garda Síochána's Modernisation and Renewal Programme 2016-2021 places a strong emphasis on developing and supporting the community policing ethos of the organisation and enhancing the current delivery model so that Gardaí spend more time in the community, gaining public confidence and trust and providing a greater sense of security.

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

Furthermore, the Garda National Model of Community Policing plays a key part in responding to crime by taking into account and responding to local conditions and needs. Clear objectives are set, such as high visibility in the community, ease of contact by members of the public, and enhanced support for crime prevention strategies. All Gardaí have a role to play in community policing in carrying out their duties. In addition, the National Community Policing Office, attached to the Garda Community Relations Bureau, captures best practice in community policing initiatives and disseminates these practices through its communication network.

I am advised that community policing continues to be a key aspect of the Garda approach to the prevention and detection of crime. Gardaí engage with a wide range of community based groups, as well in more formal settings such as Joint Policing Committees, to ensure that local issues can be aired and appropriate partnerships formed with communities to address matters of concern. Gardaí also support over 3,700 Community Alert and Neighbourhood Watch Schemes nationwide, and these form an important partnership with An Garda Síochána to prevent crime and protect communities, especially the elderly and more vulnerable persons. In addition, the Garda Text Alert Scheme provides an effective means for Gardaí to communicate crime prevention information to local communities.

The 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.

Budget 2018 will support the continuation of this high level of investment in the Garda workforce and ensure that the vision of an overall workforce of 21,000 by 2021 remains on track. This year a further 800 new Garda Recruits will enter the Garda College. Also a further 600 Garda trainees are scheduled to attest during the year which will see Garda numbers, taking account of projected retirements, reach 14,000 by the end of 2018.

In conclusion, all Garda activities, including community policing, will undoubtedly, support all Garda activities and will enhance the provision of effective community policing throughout the country.

Garda Youth Diversion Projects

23 May 2018

113. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the extent to which he continues to support programmes to encourage young persons off the streets; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22826/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The statutory framework relating to young offenders and the Garda Diversion Programme is set out in the Children Act 2001. The operation of the Garda Diversion Programme is supported by the nationwide network of Garda Youth Diversion Projects (GYDPs).

GYDPs are community based, multi-agency, crime prevention initiatives which primarily seek to divert young people who have become involved in criminal or anti-social behaviour. They aim to support young people to develop and mature through positive interventions and interactions with a local project. GYDPs provide a range of education and training programmes e.g. academic support, IT, employment preparation and specific job training.

My Department is currently running an extensive consultation process on the future development of GYDP services.

At present there are 105 GYDPs operating nationally which provided GYDP services to 3,765 participants during 2017.

In 2017, my Department provided €13,290,518 in grant funding to support the delivery of the nationwide network of Garda Youth Diversion Projects. A further €1,372,178 in grant funding was provided to support a range of other activities, including project work relating to Local Drugs Task Forces, pilot mentoring initiatives and measures to support training and best practices.

From 2015, GYDPs have been co-funded under the Programme for Employability Inclusion and Learning of the European Social Fund (ESF) 2014-2020.

In addition to work of GYDPs, the Probation Service provided €5,086,500 to support the operation of Young Persons Probation projects in 2017.

Question No. 114 answered with Question No. 103.

Garda Data

115. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of gardaí in training in Templemore; when they are expected to take up duty throughout the country; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22828/18]

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

I am further informed by the Commissioner that on the 30 April 2018, the latest date for

which figures are readily available, the strength of An Garda Síochána was 13,632. There are also 562 Garda Reserves and more than 2,280 civilians attached to An Garda Síochána.

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. 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. There are currently 614 trainee Gardaí attached to Phase 1 of the training programme in the College. In total, 800 Garda trainees are scheduled to attest during the year, some 200 of whom attested in March.

Taking account of projected retirements, reaching a strength of 15,000 by 2021 will require some 1,600 more Garda members to be recruited on a phased basis over the next two years. This is an ambitious programme of accelerated recruitment. To ensure a continuous pipeline of candidates a new recruitment drive was launched by the Commissioner last week with a closing date of 6 June. The competition is being undertaken by the Public Appointment Service on behalf of the Commissioner and applications should be made to www.publicjobs.ie.

In addition to the investment in more Gardaí, 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.

We are now rebuilding the organisation and providing the Commissioner with the resources needed to deploy increasing numbers of Gardaí. Undoubtedly, the ongoing recruitment process will support all Garda activities and enhance visibility within both urban and rural communities and will enable the Commissioner to provide additional resources across every Garda Division.

For the Deputy's information I have set out in the following tables details of the planned Garda recruit intakes and attestations for the remainder of 2018.

Scheduled Garda Recruits Intakes 2018

Date	Numbers
July 2018	200
Oct 2018	200

Scheduled Garda Trainee Attestations 2018

Date	Expected No. of Trainees
June 2018	200
Sept 2018	200

Questions Nos. 116 and 117 answered with Question No. 108.

Garda Data

118. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of gardaí injured in the course of duty in the past six years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22831/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I know the Deputy will agree that we should never underestimate the difficulties and dangers the men and women of An Garda Síochána face on our behalf and the courage required to face down criminals in dangerous circumstances. The Government is committed to supporting the work of An Garda Síochána and to ensuring that the organisation is properly resourced to carry out its important role in protecting our communities.

I am assured by the Garda Commissioner that An Garda Síochána is committed to ensuring that members exposed to a traumatic incident or injured on duty receive the appropriate organisational response and with this in mind the Garda Employee Assistance Service provides a confidential professional support and referral service to both serving and former members of An Garda Síochána, students and their immediate families.

I am advised that an Independent Counselling Service was introduced in An Garda Síochána on 24 June 2016 which provides counselling on a wide range of work and personal related issues including critical incidents, and trauma. The service is available on a 24/7 basis 365 days a year and provides employees with immediate support from accredited counsellors over the phone and if required follow on counselling sessions in person.

I have been advised by the Garda Commissioner that the number of Gardaí injured on duty during the period 2013 to 2017 and up to 23 May 2018 is as set out in the following table.

Number Gardaí injured on duty 2013 – 2018*							
Year	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018*	Grand Total
Total	513	629	630	664	635	181	3252

*Up to 23 May 2018

Criminal Assets Bureau

119. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the full extent of the scale and value of assets seized by the Criminal Assets Bureau in the past five years; if all such properties have been disposed of and the proceeds retained by the State; the status of properties not yet disposed of in this context; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22832/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): Section 21 of the Criminal Assets Bureau Act 1996 requires the Bureau, through the Garda Commissioner, to provide a report of its activities each year to the Minister for Justice and Equality who is then required to lay copies of the report before each House of the Oireachtas. The Annual Reports, including

the most recent one for 2016 are available in the Oireachtas library and on the websites of An Garda Síochána and my own Department. I am advised that the 2017 Annual Report is currently being finalised and will be submitted to my Department shortly.

These Annual Reports provide details of the actions taken by the Bureau under the Proceeds of Crime Act 1996 – 2016, including details in relation to the volume and value of assets seized and disposed of by the Bureau.

All monies collected by the Criminal Assets Bureau are paid into the Government's Central Fund, from which the Government draws for expenditure on all necessary public services and investment.

Garda Investigations

120. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the extent to which resources continue to be made available for the pursuit of cold cases, including those of missing persons whose whereabouts have never been confirmed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22833/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I can assure the Deputy that this Government is committed to ensuring that An Garda Síochána have the necessary resources to tackle all forms of criminality in the State, including those cases currently under review by the Serious Crime Review Team (SCRT).

I am informed by the Garda authorities that the SCRT continues to review serious cases that remain unsolved and continues to identify evidence and witnesses to assist in the development of these cases. The Deputy will appreciate that these matters fall within the remit of the Garda Commissioner and his management team and I have no role in this regard.

I am further advised that at the conclusion of each review by the SCRT, a substantive report is provided to the Senior Investigating Officer who considers the opportunities for further investigation. Any recommendation of organisational effect is disseminated within the Garda organisation to improve the overall investigative capability of An Garda Síochána.

The Deputy will appreciate that all Garda activities, including the investigation of unsolved cases, will benefit from the very significant investments which have been made in policing resources - all of which will support enhanced investigation and detection of crime, and benefit ongoing investigations. Budget 2018 will support the continuation of this high level of investment in the Garda workforce and ensure that the vision of an overall workforce of 21,000 by 2021 remains on track.

Garda Information and Communications Technology

121. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the extent to which modern technology is available to and used by An Garda Síochána; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22834/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Deputy will be aware that the Programme for a Partnership Government recognises that Gardaí must have the modern technology and resources necessary to detect and investigate crimes, and to prevent loss and harm to citizens and their property on a 24/7 basis.

I am informed by the Garda authorities that ICT is recognised as an essential tool for supporting the day-to-day operations of over 16,000 Garda members, Garda reserves and civilian staff. On an annual basis, approximately 13.5 million vehicle registrations are read by the Automated Number Plate Recognition System, 1.9 million records are exchanged electronically with the Court Services, 9.3 million PULSE searches are conducted, 19.5 million TETRA secure digital radio calls are made and 118,000 fingerprints are searched.

A significant reform programme is currently underway in An Garda Síochána. In line with the Government's Five Year Reform and High-level Workforce Plan, the key driver of reform is the Commissioner's 5-year Modernisation and Renewal Programme 2016-2021, which sets out a series of initiatives including those which will enable An Garda Síochána deploy the latest cutting-edge technologies in the fight against crime. In support of this plan, some €342 million, including €217 million under the Capital Plan, is being invested in Garda ICT infrastructure between 2016 and 2021.

In this context, a broad range of ICT projects are being delivered to support existing systems and develop them further, with the overall goal of supporting the ongoing business requirements of An Garda Síochána in all fields.

Some key ICT projects include:

- a new Property & Exhibits Management system, which has been deployed to record all property and exhibits which come into Garda possession and to manage them from scene to court.

- A new e-Vetting system is now operational which provides online processing of applications for Garda vetting for persons working with children and vulnerable persons. This system won the national eGovernment Award for 2017.

- A new Anti-Money Laundering application (GoAML) which supports Financial Intelligence Units to counter Organised Crime and Terrorist Financing and Money Laundering was implemented in June 2017.

- A new Enterprise Content Management System, to provide An Garda Síochána with a single enterprise content repository for all documentation and multimedia content created. A pilot of this system has been completed and rollout to all Divisions is currently being progressed.

- Enhancement of the PULSE system, to include Individual Victim Assessment and Victim Engagement screens and to include new functionality to enable Garda supervisors monitor the progress of incidents from initial data input right through to court outcome stage.

- A new Performance, Accountability and Learning Framework System has been developed to support performance assessment and development for all Gardaí. National rollout is currently underway.

- A new system operational since May 2017 enables the electronic capture of the details of all emergency calls to those Garda Divisional control rooms

- A new Intelligence Management System is operational and provides a single secure repository of sensitive intelligence gathered by operational members.

- A project to enhance network access to rural Garda stations is being progressed. Work on this project is well advanced and over 470 stations are now connected to the Garda network.

- A new Crime Investigations Management System is currently being developed and is

planned to commence pilot implementation in late 2018. The system will allow for the management of activities completed as part of an investigation, maintain a full history of the chain of events in an investigation, manage information gathered, and decisions/actions taken. It will also integrate closely with the new Document and Content Management System, the new Property and Exhibits Management System, and other Garda IT systems such as PULSE.

- A project to implement a new Rosters and Duty Management System is currently underway. A pilot of the system is planned to commence in the first half of 2018.

- A project to provide mobile access for front line Gardaí, via a smartphone device, to Garda Information Systems including PULSE is currently being advanced. A pilot of the mobile solution is currently in progress in the Limerick Garda Division, which will be evaluated on completion as part of consideration of further rollout.

- Preparatory work is now being completed on a future project intended to implement a new national Computer Aided Dispatch System to manage the capture of the details of all emergency calls and the dispatch of resources to the incident has commenced.

In addition, An Garda Síochána, in collaboration with the Department of Justice and Equality, is actively progressing a number of EU ICT Projects to improve police co-operation and increase border security within the EU Community. These include:

- implementation of the FIND solution which is now operational enabling the Garda National Immigration Bureau to query the Interpol Stolen Lost Travel Document Database (STLD);

- implementation of the PRÜM initiative which delivers enhancements to the Automated Finger Printing System to step up cross-border cooperation in relation to terrorism, crime and illegal immigration; and

- implementation of the Schengen Information System which is planned to be ready for evaluation by the EU Commission by mid 2019 and which will enable the rapid dissemination of information pertaining to organised crime targets and terrorist threats and other subversive and non-subversive crime types across members' states of the European Union.

Finally, it can be noted that decisions in relation to the allocation and management of Garda equipment and resources, including ICT, are a matter for the Garda Commissioner.

Citizenship Applications

122. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the reason for the delay in processing a citizenship application by a person (details supplied); the way in which their paperwork was mislaid on two occasions; if the application will be expedited; and when the person can expect a final determination. [22843/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that as the details supplied have been provided by a third party and not directly by the person referred to, we are precluded under data protection provisions from disclosing information relating to any individual case to such a third party. Therefore it would not be appropriate for us to provide any further information specific to this case at this time.

What I can say in general terms, is that applicants for certificates of naturalisation must be lawful resident at the time of grant of such a certificate, regardless of the jurisdiction in which

they reside. This is made clear to all applicants and it is incumbent on applicants to comply with this requirement.

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.

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.

Question No. 123 answered with Question No. 50.

Coroners Service

124. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will request the Law Reform Commission to undertake a review of the coroner court system (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22869/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): This particular case took some time to bring to a conclusion from both the criminal investigation perspective and the coroner's inquest. The coroner opened and adjourned, at the request of an Garda Síochána, the inquest in 2012 and a death certificate in respect of the deceased was issued then by the Civil Registrar on foot of notification by the coroner.

There followed a lengthy and complex investigation by the Gardaí and a successful criminal prosecution was completed in April 2015. However, following the conclusion of that case, the Gardaí took another criminal prosecution against a further person in relation to the incident. That case was completed in late June 2017.

The coroner, following confirmation from the Gardaí that the inquest could proceed made arrangements for the inquest which was completed in May 2018.

I am not inclined to request the Law Reform Commission that it should review the coronial system. I do not believe that such a review would serve any useful purpose in this context.

Enterprise Ireland Data

125. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of Enterprise Ireland jobs created per county in 2017, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [22776/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): On 3 January 2018, Enterprise Ireland announced its 2017 end year results. The 2017 performance was strong, reporting the highest employment in the history of the agency, the highest net job creation in the history of the agency and the lowest number of job losses since 1998. In 2017, Enterprise Ireland supported client companies employed 209,338 people. 19,332 new jobs were created by Enterprise Ireland backed companies in 2017.

We are seeing growth in traditional industry sectors such as construction and manufacturing as well as in the Digital Technology and Life Sciences sectors. These innovative companies are located across the entire country providing quality jobs in every county.

Job creation was evenly spread across the country, with every county seeing job increases in EI supported firms. Two thirds (64%) of the new jobs created were outside of Dublin. The West, Mid-West and North West saw the largest level of increases at 7% in 2017.

Enterprise Ireland attributes this strong performance by Irish businesses to the continuing growth of an entrepreneurial climate for start-ups, allied to strong jobs growth in the Construction (8% increase), Engineering (8% increase), Lifesciences (8% increase), Digital Technology (6% increase), Electronics (6% increase), Food (4% increase) and ICT sectors (5% increase).

The following table breaks down by county the jobs created in 2017 in Enterprise Ireland supported companies.

County	Total Jobs Gain in 2017 from 2016 = Permanent Full-Time (PFT) and Other Jobs
Carlow	250
Cavan	434
Clare	339
Cork	2,214
Donegal	375
Dublin	6,921
Galway	1,044
Kerry	415
Kildare	673
Kilkenny	340
Laois	168
Leitrim	100
Limerick	879
Longford	174
Louth	656
Mayo	322
Meath	651
Monaghan	494
Offaly	433
Roscommon	127
Sligo	212
Tipperary	574
Waterford	482
Westmeath	342
Wexford	342
Wicklow	371
Grand Total	19,332

Local Enterprise Offices Data

126. Deputy Maurice Quinlivan asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innova-

tion the number of local enterprise office jobs created per county in 2017, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [22777/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) are the ‘first-stop-shop’ for providing advice and guidance, financial assistance and ‘soft’ supports in the form of training and mentoring to anyone wishing to start or grow a business.

The LEOs provide a ‘signposting’ service in relation to all relevant state supports available through agencies such as Revenue, the Department of Social Protection, Education and Training Boards, the Credit Review Office and Microfinance Ireland. The LEOs also offer advice and guidance in areas such as local authority rates, public procurement and other regulations affecting business.

Subject to certain eligibility criteria, the LEOs provide financial assistance to microenterprises (10 employees or fewer) in the manufacturing and internationally traded services sector which, over time, have the potential to develop into strong export entities.

Details of the number of new full- and part-time jobs created in gross terms amongst LEO supported companies in 2017 are set out in the following table.

LEO NAME	Number of LEO Clients	Number of Gross Jobs
Carlow	216	187
Cavan	206	207
Clare	224	251
Cork City	156	128
Cork North & West	261	154
Cork South	203	209
Donegal	200	255
Dublin City	397	445
Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown	256	338
Fingal	211	226
South Dublin	285	351
Galway County/City	254	192
Kerry	425	267
Kildare	171	282
Kilkenny	254	232
Laois	115	93
Leitrim	155	104
Limerick	299	279
Longford	243	177
Louth	235	200
Mayo	207	242
Meath	242	284
Monaghan	152	207
Offaly	196	193
Roscommon	167	131
Sligo	231	152
Tipperary	297	467

LEO NAME	Number of LEO Clients	Number of Gross Jobs
Waterford	319	182
WestMeath	265	300
Wexford	213	238
Wicklow	127	162
Total	7182	7135

Job Creation Targets

127. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the job creation targets for the IDA, Enterprise Ireland and local enterprise offices in each of the years 2018 to 2022, in tabular form. [22779/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Yearly job creation figures by IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland (EI) and the Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) are captured by the Annual Employment Survey conducted by my Department and published in January each year. The 2017 survey remains the most up to date and accurate source of information on Enterprise Agency job creation until the 2018 figures are published early next year.

The IDA, EI and the LEOs publish their yearly targets as part of the Action Plan for Jobs (APJ) process. Through the APJ the Government has committed to creating 200,000 new jobs by 2020, with 135,000 of these to be located outside of Dublin. Under the APJ the Government is also aiming to have a further 10 to 15 per cent at work in each region by 2020, with the unemployment rate of each region to be brought within one per cent of the national average.

Each of the Agencies have their own strategies targeting these ambitious levels of job creation over the coming years. Enterprise Ireland's strategy for 2017-2020 is to assist clients to create 60,000 new jobs and to sustain its existing record level of jobs. Enterprise Ireland has not published targets beyond 2020.

As part of its current strategy, IDA Ireland aims to create 80,000 new jobs and 900 new investments in the period from 2015 to 2019. I am pleased to say that total employment by overseas companies in Ireland now stands at a landmark 210,443 people which is an increase of 5.3% from 2016. This figure surpasses the IDA's original five-year target of reaching 209,000 jobs in multinationals here. This is the highest level of employment in overseas firms in the history of the State and will deliver wide-ranging economic benefits for the people of Ireland.

The LEO 2017 annual jobs survey results highlighted three consecutive years of local jobs growth throughout the country, with a net increase of 3,760 jobs and total direct employment among LEO client companies standing at 37,485. The LEOs are aiming to have 40,000 people employed in their client companies by the end of 2018 with 47,750 people employed by 2020. Targets have not been published beyond 2020.

Office of the Director of Corporate Enforcement Staff

128. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation if the necessary funding for the recruitment of additional resources, including two additional full-time digital forensic specialists, for the Office of the Director of Corporate Enforcement will be provided; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [22795/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Over recent years, a number of senior-level vacancies have arisen within the Office of the Director of Corporate Enforcement (ODCE) through a combination of retirement, promotion and transfer to other parts of the public service. In that context, the skill sets, competencies, roles and responsibilities associated with each of those posts have been reviewed and reconfigured by the Director of Corporate Enforcement to better reflect the organisation's current needs.

Following engagement between my Department, the Director and the Public Appointments Service (PAS), seven Forensic Accountants were recruited and a further one has been selected and is about to be appointed. The Department also recruited a Digital Forensics Specialist, who was assigned to the ODCE.

My Department is working with PAS and the Director towards the filling of two vacancies for Enforcement Lawyers and a recruitment campaign to fill these vacancies with suitably qualified and experienced candidates is at an advanced stage.

With effect from the 23rd April, a staff member commenced a career break. My Department is working to fill this vacancy.

At present, there are no requests for additional staffing from the ODCE.

Whilst the Office, along with a number of other State organisations, faces challenges in the recruitment of highly qualified professional staff, particularly in the current buoyant labour market, I am satisfied that it has sufficient pay monies.

Orthodontic Services Waiting Lists

129. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) can expect an appointment for orthodontic treatment. [22728/18]

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

130. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the location in which blood tests taken in general practice and at Louth County Hospital are analysed. [22730/18]

133. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the number of blood tests that were taken in general practice and at Louth County Hospital, Dundalk, in 2017; and the location in which blood tests were analysed. [22733/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 130 and 133 together.

As these questions relate to service matters, I have arranged for the questions to be referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Hospital Services

131. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the staffing complement in the

phlebotomy laboratory at Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital, Drogheda; if staff have recently left; and if so, if they will be replaced. [22731/18]

132. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the circumstances which would impact on the speed at which the venesection unit in Louth County Hospital, Dundalk, would receive blood test results. [22732/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 131 and 132 together.

In relation to the specific queries raised by the Deputy, as these are service matters, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond to you directly as soon as possible.

Question No. 133 answered with Question No. 130.

Psychological Services

134. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the number of children and adults on the waiting list for screening appointments with the primary care clinical psychology service in County Louth; and the length of time they have been waiting. [22734/18]

135. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the number of children and adults on the waiting list for initial assessment with the primary care clinical psychology service in County Louth; and the length of time they have been waiting. [22735/18]

136. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the number of children and adults on the waiting list for intervention with the primary care clinical psychology service in County Louth; and the length of time they have been waiting. [22736/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 134 to 136, inclusive, together.

As these question(s) relate to service matters, I have arranged for them to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply.

Hospital Procedures

137. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Health if additional resources will be provided to address the unacceptable waiting times for orthopaedic appointments in respect of patients triage as urgent in a hospital (details supplied) County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22739/18]

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 National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF) activity in 2018. The Action Plan includes a focus on orthopaedic patients with 800 of the 20,000 NTPF funded procedures planned for patients requiring hip/knee replacements.

In 2018, under the Plan, all clinically suitable patients waiting over 9 months for a hip/knee replacement will be offered treatment this year.

I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly in regard to the individual patient enquiry.

Home Care Packages

138. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Health the status of the removal of the in loco parentis clause in HSE home care nursing packages in view of the motion which was passed in Dáil Éireann on 27 March 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22747/18]

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 Appointments Status

139. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** 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. [22751/18]

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

140. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health if an appointment for a person (details supplied) at UHW will be expedited; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22785/18]

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 na-

tional 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.

Autism Support Services

141. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the status of the review of autism services which took place in late 2017; when the review will be published; if an implementation plan of actions will be published alongside it; the way in which recommendations and future actions will take account of geographical disparities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22789/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): As the Deputy is aware, at the request of the Minister, the HSE have conducted a review of services to identify existing models of best practice. The review has now been completed and has been delivered to the Department and is with the Minister for his consideration.

Mental Health Act Review

142. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health if his Department is preparing legislation following a judgment (details supplied) regarding section 15(3) of the Mental Health Act 2001; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22797/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): The Government and I have noted the judgement by the Court of Appeal on 4 May 2018 that renewal orders by Mental Health Tribunals under Section 15(3) of the Mental Health Act 2001 breach Article 40.4.1 of the Constitution.

This judgement raises certain legal questions which require careful consideration and these are currently being examined in detail by my Department, in conjunction with Senior Counsel and relevant agencies including the HSE, the Office of the Attorney General, the Chief State Solicitor's Office and the Mental Health Commission. The Mental Health Commission has responsibility for the regulation and independent review of admission and renewal orders by Mental Health Tribunals.

The declaration of unconstitutionality by the Court of Appeal stands suspended until 8th November 2018 which allows time for the Government and Oireachtas to give full and proper consideration to this matter as is appropriate given the vulnerability of the patients affected by this judgement.

The Department of Health has already undertaken consultations as to next steps and I expect to be able to propose an appropriate way forward in the very short term.

Cancer Screening Programmes

143. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health when he expects to introduce the more accurate HPV test for cervical cancer screening; if these tests will be carried out

in Irish laboratories; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22798/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The outcome of a health technology assessment carried out by the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) for the National Screening Service was that the HPV test is a more accurate testing mechanism than the current liquid-based cytology, that the use of the HPV test would result in fewer false negative results, and that the use of the HPV test would result in more cancers being prevented.

I approved the switch to HPV testing as the primary screening mechanism for the Cervical-Check programme in February. Under the proposals, cytology testing will still be done on a smaller cohort as a secondary test. The introduction of the test was intended for October of this year and I have asked the HSE to implement the move to HPV testing as the primary screening method as soon as possible.

While the extent to which the HPV testing can be done in Ireland is being assessed, it is likely that a tendering process will be needed to meet at least some of the HPV testing requirement.

Hospital Staff

144. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health the extent of vacancies currently in MRH Mullingar across each discipline; the length of time each post has been vacant; and the measures under way to fill same. [22802/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond to you directly, as soon as possible.

Hospital Staff

145. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 136 of 16 May 2018, the discipline and grades of the former staff who have resigned unexpectedly at Louth County Hospital, Dundalk; and the way in which this has contributed to the delay in the expansion of the minor injuries unit. [22803/18]

146. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the recruitment initiatives undertaken in order that the minor injuries unit at Louth County Hospital, Dundalk, be appropriately staffed to enable treatment of paediatric patients over five years of age. [22804/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 145 and 146 together.

In relation to the specific queries raised by the Deputy, as these are service matters, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond to you directly as soon as possible.

Cancer Services Provision

147. **Deputy Bobby Aylward** asked the Minister for Health the steps that he has taken to alleviate waiting lists for scans at a hospital (details supplied) for women with a family history of ovarian cancer in particular; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22812/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The HSE National Cancer Control Programme have advised that there is a national ovarian cancer GP referral guideline in place (a

copy has been provided to the Deputy). This referral guideline includes a pathway to urgent ultrasound, if required.

With regard to the particular hospital raised in the Deputy's question, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

Orthodontic Services Waiting Lists

148. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health if a matter regarding a person (details supplied) will be expedited; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22816/18]

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.

Nursing Homes Support Scheme

149. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health if a query by a person (details supplied) regarding the fair deal scheme will be answered; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22846/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): A review of the Nursing Homes Support Scheme (NHSS) was published in July 2015. Arising out of the review, a recommendation was made to examine the treatment of business and farm assets for the purposes of the financial assessment element of the scheme. The Programme for a Partnership Government also committed to reviewing the NHSS to remove any discrimination against small businesses and family farms.

At present, the capital value of an individual's principal private residence is only included in the financial assessment for the first three years of their time in care. This is known as the three year cap. This cap does not apply to productive assets such as farms and businesses except in cases of sudden illness or disability where specific conditions are met.

It is proposed to amend the scheme to treat farm and business assets in the same manner as the principal private residence where a family successor commits to working the farm or business, i.e. to cap contributions at three years.

The Department of Health has been examining the potential for changes to the treatment of business and farm assets under the Nursing Homes Support Scheme. Any changes to the scheme, if approved by Government, will require amendment of the Nursing Homes Support Scheme Act 2009.

A Memorandum for Government setting out the details of the proposed policy change and seeking Government approval to draft the General Scheme of a bill to amend the Nursing Homes Support Scheme Act 2009 has been prepared and will shortly be circulated to other Government Departments for observations.

Respite Care Services Data

150. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Health the number of

persons waiting for a respite placement in disability services in each local health office in tabular form. [22853/18]

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 Waiting Lists

151. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** 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. [22855/18]

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.

Commissions of Investigation

152. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health his views on reports in respect of the Farrelly commission that some families at the centre of the scandal are threatening to withdraw their co-operation in view of the adversarial approach being adopted by the commission. [22857/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Commission of Investigation (certain matters relevant to a disability service in the South East and related matters), the Farrelly Commission, is an independent statutory Commission of Investigation established by the Government in March 2017. It would be inappropriate for me to comment on this issue.

Health Services Staff Recruitment

153. **Deputy Jan O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Health when the doctor who carries out eye examinations at a clinic (details supplied) will be replaced in view of the fact waiting times are in excess of 12 months; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22863/18]

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.

Suicide Prevention

154. **Deputy Paul Murphy** asked the Minister for Health his plans to increase resources for suicide prevention services in west Tallaght in view of the large number of deaths due to suicide in the area (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22866/18]

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

155. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** 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. [22871/18]

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

156. **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. [22874/18]

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 sched-

uled 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.

Home Care Packages Administration

157. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Health if a home care package allocation for a person (details supplied) will be reviewed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22875/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Medicinal Products Reimbursement

158. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health if a matter raised in correspondence (details supplied) will be addressed; the reason the HSE has not met with the company in question; the position regarding the drug; the reason the HSE has not followed his direction on the matter; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22886/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Health Service Executive 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. The 2013 Act does not give the Minister for Health any powers in this regard.

The Act specifies the criteria to be applied in the making of reimbursement decisions which include the clinical and cost effectiveness of the product, the opportunity cost and the impact on resources that are available to the HSE.

In July 2017, the HSE informed the Department that, following an intensive process, the HSE decided not to reimburse Ataluren (Translarna) for the treatment of Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy. The HSE in deciding not to reimburse Translarna did not consider the evidence for its clinical benefit to be sufficiently strong, in the context of the proposed cost and budget impact.

The HSE informed the applicant company of this decision, in keeping with the requirements of the 2013 Act. The applicant has appealed the HSE's decision to the High Court, which is part of the statutory process under Section 27 of the 2013 Act.

As you are aware, a meeting took place on the 11 December 2017 with 2 representatives from Muscular Dystrophy Ireland, Dr O'Rourke and HSE and Departmental officials.

Following on from this meeting, the HSE advised the applicant that it is willing to complete a timely review of any new application. It would be open to the company to make revised proposals in relation to pricing or access in this context.

The HSE has notified the company that is ready and willing to review any new application irrespective of the on-going court proceedings.

Animal Disease Controls

159. **Deputy Pat Casey** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the progress on the elimination of TB in County Wicklow in view of the high incidence of the disease in the west of the county; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22726/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Levels of bovine TB have remained disappointingly high in Wicklow when compared with the progress achieved nationally where herd incidence stood at 3.47% at the end of 2017. However the number of reactors and the herd incidence for Wicklow has fallen considerably since 2015, as seen in the following table.

My Department remains of the view that infection from wildlife, in particular badgers, remains a particular issue in the Wicklow area. My Department continues to implement a badger removal programme in Wicklow as it does in other relevant areas. In relation to deer my Department is co-operating with the Department of Culture, Heritage and Gaeltacht to oversee and co-fund a Steering Group to manage a limited deer density reduction programme in the Calary area of Co. Wicklow. The Wicklow Deer Management Group as well as hunting and farming groups in the county are involved and a co-ordinator has been appointed who is currently liaising with landowners and hunters in order to ascertain hunting patterns in the area and collect data. As part of the initiative samples are collected for TB testing by my Department.

Our TB Eradication strategy is achieving results. However we cannot be complacent and we continue to seek methods by which to improve to reach our goal of eradicating TB by 2030. To that end, we are engaging with stakeholders and hope to establish an inclusive TB Forum to involve the whole of industry and society, working collaboratively to identify solutions and eradicate TB within that timescale.

Year	Wicklow	East	Wicklow	West
	Reactors Numbers	Herd Incidence	Reactors Numbers	Herd Incidence
2015	568	6.78%	616	12.89%
2016	640	7.26%	470	12.52%
2017	421	5.97%	309	11.05%

Fodder Crisis

160. **Deputy Pat Casey** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the measures being taken to ensure there is an adequate fodder supply for farmers in County Wicklow for the 2018-19 season; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22727/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The Deputy will be aware that in response to the recent pressures on fodder supplies caused by a long wet winter and spring I introduced a national Fodder Transport Support measure in January of this year, followed in April by a Fodder Import Support measure. Because ground conditions were slow to improve in some areas, in a concluding response to remaining fodder difficulties I decided to extend both measures by one week until 7 May. These two interventions working together effectively addressed issues around fodder availability in the country.

It is important that we all learn some of the lessons from this spring and build resilience into our systems into the future. Teagasc, the Agriculture and Food Development Authority is the national body charged with providing appropriate research and advice to the farming community. In this connection I have asked it to convene and chair a representative group including stakeholders such as co-ops, banks, farm bodies amongst others to coordinate advisory messages to farmers this summer around replenishing stocks that have been used up. I have asked that this group continues to meet regularly until it is satisfied that the issue of securing adequate fodder supplies for next winter has been fully addressed.

Basic Payment Scheme Administration

161. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if a matter regarding the deletion of parcels in the case of a person (detail supplied) will be addressed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22748/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): A 2017 Basic Payment Application in respect of the person named was received on 05 May 2017 and the relevant payments issued in October and December to the nominated bank account.

An issue arose post payment where a number of land parcels declared by the person named were also declared by another applicant. In order to resolve this issue the Department issued a dual claim letter on 23 February 2018 and a reminder on 09 May 2018. These letters outlined the issue and invited the applicant to substantiate their claim.

As you have indicated that the person named did not receive the correspondence issued by my Department I have arranged for these letters to be reissued.

Basic Payment Scheme Payments

162. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of a BPS payment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22749/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): All payments due under the Basic Payment Scheme and the Areas of Natural Constraints Scheme for 2015, 2016 and 2017 have issued to the person named.

The issue here is that a dual claim arose in respect of the 2015 Scheme Year. The person named did not respond to the original query letter or the subsequent reminder and my Department proceeded with the processing of his application on this basis.

My Department is currently reviewing recently submitted documentation in relation to this case.

Common Agricultural Policy Subsidies

163. **Deputy Pat Casey** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the impact that the proposed changes to CAP payments will have on the agrifood sector in County Wicklow; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22750/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The MFF proposals for 2021-2027 were published by Budget Commissioner Gunther Oettinger on 2 May 2018. The proposal indicates a 5% cut in the CAP budget for the next MFF period of 2021 - 2027.

The total CAP budget (EAGF and EAFRD) will be approximately €365 billion over the 7 year period (2021-2027). Pillar 1 (EAGF) will account for approximately €286 billion with Pillar 2 (EAFRD) accounting for approximately €79 billion.

My officials are continuing to analyse the proposals. The CAP regulations are due to be published in early June 2018 and are expected to include the allocations per Member State.

I will continue to work closely with other Member States, the European Commission and the European Parliament to ensure as strong a CAP budget as possible post 2020.

Basic Payment Scheme Administration

164. **Deputy Bobby Aylward** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the position regarding the rules relating to farm entitlements in instances in which there is an injunction on a deceased person's estate; if it is possible for his Department to transfer entitlements to a person's name in such an instance; if it is possible to seek a change of herd number into another person's name before the probate process is complete without first informing the official herd keeper as appointed through the ER1 process; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22783/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): In relation to Basic Payment Scheme Entitlements and in instances where a deceased person's estate is subject to legal proceedings, following the resolution of the legal issues, my Department will work with the parties involved to ensure the estate of the deceased is administered as appropriate.

Regarding the re-activation of a herd number, in cases where a herd owner is deceased, a transfer of herd owner request would need to be made, requiring all the usual evidence as to the right of the transferee. The application for a herd number must be accompanied by proof of ownership of land (folio) or copy of a lease agreement. The ER1 is an application form for one single individual to register as a keeper of animals on a holding.

Agriculture Scheme Appeals

165. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of a farm payment appeal by a person (details supplied); if same will be expedited; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22808/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The person named submitted an online application for consideration under the 2017 Basic Payment Scheme on 14 June 2017, thus incurring a 100% late penalty as it was outside the application period for the scheme. The person named submitted an appeal and following a review the person named was deemed unsuccessful.

The person named was notified of this decision on 8 March 2018 and he was also informed that the decision could be further appealed to the Agriculture Appeals Office within 3 months. I understand that to date no such appeal has been received.

Commonage Framework Plans

166. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if the decision to remove a commonage for eligibility in GLAS and BPS payments can be reversed in view of the fact that the lands are being actively used; the status of the appeal lodged by a number of stakeholders (details supplied) on the commonage; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22854/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The Department of Agriculture Food and the Marine is obliged to ensure that lands declared for payment under the various areas based schemes meet the conditions of eligibility. These conditions are clearly set out in the BPS/ANC Terms and Conditions sent to all applicants on an annual basis and are also covered in the Guide to Land Eligibility sent to all applicants in 2015.

The Department is required annually to review imagery to ascertain if there are any ineligible features being declared for payment. The lands in question, based on an internal risk assessment process, were selected for a ground inspection in 2017. The result of this inspection determined that the lands were not being actively farmed and hence did not meet the definition of eligibility as set out in the Terms and Conditions.

An appeal has been received in my Department from the applicant's adviser with regard to the result of the inspection in 2017. The appeal is currently being considered and officials from my Department will be in contact with the applicants in due course.

Broadband Service Provision

167. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment when e-fibre broadband is likely to be rolled out at a location (details supplied). [22743/18]

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. 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.

The location referred to by the Deputy is in an AMBER area on my Department's High Speed Broadband Map, which is available at www.broadband.gov.ie. Access to high speed broadband will be brought to these premises through State Aid Intervention under the NBP.

My Department is the final stages of the formal procurement process to select a company who will roll-out a new high speed broadband network in the State intervention area.

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 appoint-

ment 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. The Department of Rural and Community Development maintain a list of Broadband Officers, a link to which is available on my Department's website at <https://www.dccae.gov.ie/en-ie/communications/topics/Broadband/national-broadband-plan/latest-news/Pages/Broadband-Officers-Workshop.aspx>.

National Broadband Plan Implementation

168. **Deputy Pat Casey** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the progress of rural broadband roll-out in County Wicklow by area; the dates on which areas of the county will be connected to high speed broadband by area in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22745/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): The National Broadband Plan (NBP) aims to deliver high speed 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. 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.

The High Speed Broadband Map, available at www.broadband.gov.ie shows the extent of the State Intervention area. The map is colour coded and searchable by address/eircode:

- The AMBER areas represent the target areas for the State led Intervention under the NBP and are the subject of an ongoing procurement process.

- The BLUE represent those areas where commercial providers are either currently delivering or have plans to deliver high speed broadband services.

- The LIGHT BLUE areas represent eir's commercial rural deployment plans to rollout high speed broadband to 300,000 premises as part of a Commitment Agreement signed with me in April 2017.

Premises in County Wicklow fall within areas to be served either commercially or through a State led intervention and are colour coded accordingly. There are c64,000 premises in Co Wicklow of which some 14,000 fall within the State led intervention under the NBP and are the focus of the procurement process which is now in its final stages. The remaining premises, circa 50,000, are or will be served by commercial operators and include approximately 3,000 premises which are part of eir's 300,000 planned rural deployment. According to Q1 2018 figures provided to my Department by eir, over 3,000 premises in Co Wicklow have already been provided with access to a high speed service under this deployment, with a further 3,000 premises yet to be passed.

A breakdown of the number of premises which fall into each of these categories on a townland by townland basis will be forwarded directly to the Deputy.

For those premises awaiting access to high speed broadband, 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. The Department of Rural and Community Development maintain a list of Broadband Officers, a link to which is available on my Department's website at <https://www.dccae.gov.ie/en-ie/communications/topics/Broadband/national-broadband-plan/latest-news/Pages/Broadband-Officers-Workshop.aspx>

Renewable Energy Generation Targets

169. **Deputy Pat Casey** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the preferred ratio of renewable energy sectors to operate here, that is, the percentage of onshore wind, offshore wind, photovoltaic and so on in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22754/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): The Energy White Paper presents a long-term strategic vision that is intended to guide the direction of Irish energy policy from now until 2030. It identifies the long-term strategic importance of diversifying Ireland's energy generation portfolio and largely decarbonising the energy sector by 2050. It does not set out targets or preferred ratios for specific renewable technologies; rather it provides a framework to guide policy between now and 2030.

The National Mitigation Plan 2017 restates the Government's commitment to move from a fossil fuel-based electricity system to a low-carbon power system. Investment in further renewable generation will be incentivised. Natural gas will continue to play a key role as a transition fuel.

The National Development Plan 2018-2027 sets out clear measures towards decarbonisation, including the upgrading of 45,000 homes every year from 2021 to make them energy efficient, up to 4,500MW of renewable electricity generation, roll-out of the support scheme for renewable heat, and commitments on electric vehicles and low-emission public transport. However, in the transition, the lowest CO2 emitting fossil fuel is still required to ensure a safe, secure and competitive path towards sustainability. In addition to this the planned closure of Moneypoint by 2025 and the ending of peat for electricity generation in advance of 2030 will have a positive impact.

In regard to future electricity demand, EirGrid have modelled a number of scenarios in their 2017 publication "Tomorrow's Energy Scenarios". Each scenario predicts a different possible future for the generation and consumption of electricity out to 2040. A link to the document is available at: <http://www.eirgridgroup.com/site-files/library/EirGrid/EirGrid-Tomorrows-Energy-Scenarios-Report-2017.pdf>

Cyber Security Policy

170. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he or his Department is co-ordinating cross-Government responses or plans for the cyber security of Government Departments to ensure that enough actions are being taken against a matter which has been described by the FBI in the USA and the NCSC in London as a threat to the safety, security and integrity of the cyber ecosystem. [22574/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): The National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC), which is a unit of my Department, has been engaged in a series of actions around assisting Government Departments and State Agencies in preserving the security of their networks and data for a number of years. A key component of that work has involved building technical capacity and situational awareness as to trends and developments around Network and Information Security generally, and particularly those risks that might arise for Government and Critical Infrastructure. The NCSC operates an Advisories and Alerts System which allows the unit rapidly disseminate information to Government Departments, Agencies and Critical Infrastructure Operators. These entities have signed up to this formally managed system, which is governed by a Traffic Light Protocol (or TLP) setting out the manner in which any information contained therein should be treated. This system presently has around 120 constituents and has recently been augmented with an SMS alert system.

On 17th April 2018, the NCSC issued an Advisory related to the issues referred to by the Deputy in his question, setting out the nature of the threats, and the precise types of equipment that have been targeted. The Advisory also contained a series of mitigation measures that constituents should consider, and a reminder that any incidents, of this or any type, should be reported to the NCSC. The Advisory carried a TLP AMBER rating. The NCSC remains in contact with similar bodies in other jurisdictions and any further pertinent information will be passed to constituents as soon as it is received.

The NCSC is also engaged in a series of other actions in this area. For example, a new website for the NCSC has been launched, and this will shortly be updated with information to assist individuals and small and medium sized businesses to protect their information systems. The unit has also been heavily engaged in work to prepare for the EU Network and Information Security Directive, which will place binding security requirements on critical infrastructure operators and certain key Digital Service Providers. The Directive also places obligations on the State itself, in terms of ensuring that States can cooperate and share information in the event of a large scale incident affecting several countries and to ensure that every State has significant capacity of its own. To that end, the Computer Security Incident Response Team (CSIRT) within the NCSC received international accreditation in 2017 and plays an active role in a number of European and international organisations. The unit also participates in international exercises, including an upcoming European aviation security event.

My Department is also working on a new National Cyber Security Strategy, which will set out a series of measures to be taken in the coming years across the public and private sector. This Strategy will be consulted on later this year, in advance of finalisation.

Environmental Protection Agency

171. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his plans to remove the immunity from prosecution provided to the EPA in section 15 of the EPA Act of 1992, as was recommended by the Ombudsman in 2011; his views on whether one of the key weaknesses in the operations of the EPA is its immunity from prosecution (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22847/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): I have no plans to amend section 15 of the Environmental Protection Agency Act 1992, either in response to the 2011 recommendation from the Environmental Protection Agency Review Group or otherwise. Notwithstanding the Review Group recommendation, I am not satisfied that a basis exists to support a proposal for amendment having regard, in particular, to the potential implications for the effective discharge by the Agency of its statutory functions

and the potential impact of such a precedent on the effective operation of other State bodies.

On the specific case mentioned in the details supplied with the Question, it would not be appropriate for me to comment or interfere in any way in a licence application, the determination of which is a statutory function of the Environmental Protection Agency under Part IV of the 1992 Act.

Aviation Industry Regulations

172. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the rules and regulations surrounding drones (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22759/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The Irish Aviation Authority (IAA) has statutory responsibility for aviation safety regulation in Ireland, including the regulation of remotely piloted aircraft systems (drones), as provided for under S.I. No. 563/2015 - Irish Aviation Authority (Small Unmanned Aircraft (Drones) and Rockets) Order, 2015. Under this Order, all drones weighing over 1 kilogram must be registered with the IAA. To date over 8,500 drones and model aircraft have been so registered.

The IAA is responsible for ensuring that drones are used properly and in safe locations. The IAA's safe use of drones' guidance includes specific restrictions on their use, and the Authority responds to reports of misuse on a case-by-case basis when it is brought to their attention. In addition, any unauthorised use of a drone may be referred to An Garda Síochána for investigation.

Should the Deputy require further information about the implementation of S.I. No. 563 of 2015 the IAA is available to assist.

Road Traffic Legislation

173. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will request the Law Reform Commission to prepare consolidated legislation on road traffic law; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22799/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The priorities in my Department in respect of road traffic legislation have been focused on the safe passage of both the Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill 2017 and the Vehicle Registration Data (Automated Searching and Exchange) Bill 2018 through both houses of the Oireachtas. While the latter Bill has passed all stages, the Road Traffic (amendment) Bill 2017 remains in Report and Final

In addition, I have asked my officials to commence work on a road traffic bill to provide for graduated penalties for speeding offences. Consolidation of the Road Traffic Acts may ultimately require an element of outsourcing but this has yet to be fully examined.

Superannuation Schemes

174. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if his attention has been drawn to the fact that the State is estimating that the trial alone for the current pensioners of IASS will take up to 12 weeks and has cost nearly €1.5 million already to bring it

to this stage; if he will request the SCA to engage in mediation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22836/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): It is the advice of the Attorney General that this matter should be defended. As it is *sub judice*, I am unable to comment any further on the issue.

Railway Stations

175. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if his attention has been drawn to the fact that in Limerick Junction railway station's waiting room there is a printed timetable for all services to Limerick, Cork and Dublin and no timetable for the two daily services which originate at the station for Tipperary town, Cahir, Clonmel, Carrick-on-Suir and Waterford; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22738/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The issue raised is a matter for Iarnród Éireann and I have forwarded the Deputy's question to the Company for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a response within ten working days.

Road Projects

176. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will reopen the public consultation process and arrange a public engagement day for local persons to meet with engineers to discuss route options for a planned TEN-T route (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22757/18]

177. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will reopen the public consultation process and arrange a public engagement day for local persons to meet with engineers to discuss route options for a planned TEN-T route (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22758/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 176 and 177 together.

As Minister for Transport, Tourism & Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme. The planning, design and implementation of individual road projects is a matter for Transport Infrastructure Ireland under the Roads Acts 1993-2015 in conjunction with the local authorities concerned.

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 Administration

178. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the criteria under which sports capital grant applications are assessed; the details of the criteria and the weighting of each category within the criteria; if there is a specific category in the marking of applications for clubs and organisations in RAPID areas; if he will provide additional detail regarding the part of the application process that deals with disadvantaged areas; and if he will

make a statement on the matter. [22769/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin): The full assessment process and scoring system for the 2017 round of the Sports Capital Programme was published in advance of the assessment work commencing and is available on my Department's website at <http://www.dttas.ie/sites/default/files/publications/sport/english/sports-capital-programme-scoring-system-and-assessment-procedures/assessment-manual-2017-scp.pdf>.

As outlined in the manual contained on the website, the assessment process was a three stage process:

1. Applications were first checked for validity;

2. Applications were then given a score between 0 and 3 for each of the six assessment criteria with each of these scores then being multiplied by the weighting for that criteria. The weighting for each criteria are set out in the table below. The weighted scores were then added together to give the total assessment score;

3. Allocation amounts were then calculated. The amount allocated to each project was based on a combination of its assessment score, the amount sought and the total amount available for that county based on a per-capita distribution.

Criteria	Weighting
Likelihood of increased participation/improved performance	7
Sharing of facilities	4
Level of socio-economic disadvantage in the area	5
Technical merits of the project	4
Level of own funding available (higher scoring for funding in disadvantaged areas)	5
Level of SCP funding received in the past 10 years (projects with less previous funding receive more marks)	4

The Pobal Deprivation Index was used to determine the disadvantaged status of an area. Projects from all disadvantaged areas, including RAPID areas, were awarded points under the criteria "Level of Socio-Economic Disadvantage in the Area". These projects also benefitted in terms of requiring a lower level of own funding to achieve comparable marks with projects in non-disadvantaged areas.

A full review of the 2017 round of the programme has now been finalised and published on my Department's website (www.dttas.ie). This review suggests some further improvements which should be considered prior to the next round of the programme opening for applications including the possibility of further enhanced weighting for disadvantaged areas. An announcement in relation to the timing of the next round is expected in the coming weeks.

Public Transport

179. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the legislative responsibility of each of the various stakeholders that operate in public transport; the

mechanism in place for co-operation and co-ordination; and his views on whether there is a duplication of roles (details supplied). [22791/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The establishment of the National Transport Authority (NTA) under the Dublin Transport Authority Act 2008, as amended, has improved the mechanisms in place for the cooperation and coordination of public transport.

Under the legislation, the NTA is the body responsible for securing the provision of public transport infrastructure in the Greater Dublin Area and for preparing a transport strategy to provide a long term strategic planning framework for the integrated development of transport infrastructure and services in the GDA. The National Planning Framework includes a policy objective to extend the NTA's statutory responsibility for transport planning beyond the GDA to encompass all of our cities. This will strengthen the levels of integration between spatial planning and transport planning across the country.

With regard to the other stakeholders mentioned by the Deputy, TII and the local authorities are required to act in a manner that is consistent with the NTA's transport strategy. Dublin Bus, Iarnród Éireann and Bus Éireann operate public transport services on the basis of contracts entered into with the NTA in respect of the non-commercial services operated.

Legislation governing TII is provided for under the Roads Act 2015. Legislation governing Córas Iompair Éireann is provided for under the Transport Act, 1950, as amended. Legislation governing the CIÉ subsidiary companies is provided for under the Transport (Reorganisation of Córas Iompair Éireann) Act, 1986, as amended. Legislation governing the local authorities is a matter for the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government.

The NTA has extensive powers which reflect the importance of public transport service integration. The mechanism for cooperation and coordination between the various stakeholders is a matter for the individual stakeholders but I am satisfied that there is appropriate cooperation and coordination between them and that there is no duplication of roles.

Light Rail Projects

180. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of the longer 55 m Luas trams in operation on the Green Line-Cross City Luas; if the seven 55 m trams which were projected to be rolled out by May 2018 have not yet been rolled out; if so, when he anticipates they will all be in operation; his plans for further increases in the number of trams operating on Luas lines; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22837/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As the Deputy is aware seven new 55m-long trams were ordered as part of the Luas Cross City project which opened last December. I am happy to state that six of these trams have now been delivered with five in regular service and one currently being commissioned prior to placing in service. The seventh and final tram of this batch is scheduled to be delivered to Sandyford Depot by the end of May.

The Green Line Capacity Enhancement project, which was approved by Government last year, is the next step in the medium term to further expand capacity, especially at peak hours, so as to cater for future demands along the Luas Green Line.

The project involves the lengthening of the 26 existing Green line trams from 43 metres to 55 metres and the purchase of a further 8 new 55 metre-long trams which will greatly increase

the passenger capacity of the fleet to meet future passenger demand. The project also includes modifications to Sandyford Depot to accommodate the maintenance of the longer trams.

The contract for the tram extensions was signed and the order placed in November 2017 with the first tram extension anticipated to be delivered in late 2019. Work is progressing on the procurement process for the 8 new trams. Construction work at Sandyford Depot is ongoing and is due for completion in the first quarter of next year.

A necessary complementary investment project, known as the Green Line Infrastructure Upgrade - an investment project to lengthen the platforms at the existing Green Line stations - was completed towards the end of last year and enables the use of the new, longer trams.

Seniors Alert Scheme

181. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the estimated cost in 2019 if the budget for the senior alert scheme was increased by 15%; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22796/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The allocation for the Seniors Alert Scheme in 2018 is €2.3m. The scheme was successfully re-launched late last year and I am pleased to advise the Deputy that to date the revised scheme has been a resounding success. By end of April, 7,559 applications had been approved, representing an increase of 133% over the same period in 2017.

My officials are carefully monitoring the scheme with a view to ensuring that the current levels of demand can continue to be met from within the resources available to my Department. The allocation for 2019 will be determined in the context of the Estimates.

CLÁR Programme

182. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development if a CLÁR grant will issue to a school (details supplied). [22807/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): CLÁR is a targeted capital investment programme for rural areas which have experienced significant levels of depopulation.

I launched the 2018 CLÁR programme on the 15th March last, with an indicative allocation of €5 million for qualifying projects under the following measures:

Measure 1: Support for Schools/Community Safety Measures

Measure 2: Play Areas/Multi-Use Games Areas

Measure 3: First Response Support Measure

The closing date for CLÁR 2018 was 30th April and more than 400 applications have been received. I can confirm that an application in respect of the school referred to by the Deputy has been received.

My officials are currently assessing all applications submitted under the 2018 CLÁR programme and I hope to be in a position to announce the successful projects in the coming weeks.

Community Services Programme

183. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development if he will request Pobal to maintain the current staffing complement at a club (details supplied) in County Kerry until the appraisal of its business plan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22815/18]

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.

The organisation in question is approved for funding under the CSP until end-December 2018. In late April it submitted an application for funding for the period 2019-2021. My Department requested Pobal to invite the organisation to formally submit a business plan, the next stage in the process, and a decision will be made in due course.

My Department has, this week, requested Pobal to extend the current CSP funding to the organisation pending completion of the re-contracting process.

Defined Benefit Pension Schemes

184. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the actions being taken to protect the defined benefit pension scheme of over 1,000 members (details supplied) on 30 June 2018; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [22864/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): While it is not appropriate for me to comment on an individual pension scheme, I am aware of recent announcements regarding the pension scheme in question and plans to close the scheme to future accrual. Neither I nor the Pensions Authority has the power under legislation to intervene to compel an employer to continue to make contributions to a scheme. Even where a scheme is closed to new members or to future accrual of benefits, the sponsoring employer role continues in relation to that scheme.

Almost all Irish defined benefit schemes have a rule that allows the employer to cease contributions, usually after a notice period. Currently there is no legislative obligation on the employer to make contributions and no further liability on the employer where contributions cease. Neither is there an obligation on the employer to give notice to members or to consult in advance of ceasing contributions.

However, in the case where a restructuring of benefits is proposed, the employer and the trustees of a pension scheme are required to notify scheme members, beneficiaries and the authorised trade unions. Furthermore, changes made to the Occupational Pension Schemes (Section 50 and 50B) Regulations in 2015 require trustees to also notify groups representing the interests of pensioners and deferred scheme members in a scheme in such a situation.

The Roadmap for Pensions Reform, which was published recently, details specific measures that will modernise our pension system. It sets out under Strand 4, 'Measures to Support the Operation of Defined Benefit Schemes', that the Government is committed to advancing the Social Welfare, Pensions and Civil Registration Bill 2017. The purpose of this Bill is to respond to the ongoing difficulties in DB schemes and to increase protections for members as well as encouraging employers to ensure that schemes are well funded and managed.

The general scheme of the Bill, which was published in May 2017, contained a number of key measures relating to DB pension schemes. These proposed provisions will ensure that an employer cannot “walk away” at short notice from the pension scheme it is supporting by providing a 12 month notification period where an employer is seeking to cease making contributions to a scheme. The amendments seek a middle road between the current position where employers can abandon DB schemes and full and immediate debt on employer provisions. The measures will act to support existing provisions in the Pensions Act and will provide for further protection for scheme members’ benefits and enhance employer responsibilities for their schemes.

The amendments also provide for more frequent monitoring of the financial position of schemes and will further provide that, where a scheme is in deficit and a funding proposal has not been put in place in a timely manner, the Pensions Authority may direct steps to be taken to ensure that the scheme meets the funding standard.

It is important to note that if this new legislation is enacted, a scheme will have to give a minimum notice period of twelve months before contributions can be stopped. However, it will not prevent a company from ceasing contributions once the minimum notice period is served provided the scheme meets the Minimum Funding Standard.

These provisions are quite technical and complex. Work to finalise them is at an advanced stage and I hope to be in position to bring forward the amendments at Committee Stage at the end of May or early June. With the cooperation of the Oireachtas, the Government intends to pass this legislation before the summer recess.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Pension Provisions

185. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of a scheme (details supplied). [22742/18]

186. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of a scheme (details supplied). [22746/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I propose to take Questions Nos. 185 and 186 together.

It is the responsibility of the employer to pay pension contributions on behalf of his/her employees to Pension Trustees. In the event that a company becomes insolvent and a liquidator or receiver is appointed over the company, claims for certain arrears of pension contributions can be submitted by the liquidator or receiver for payment under the Insolvency Payments Scheme.

The Insolvency Payments Scheme operates under the Protection of Employees (Employers’ Insolvency) Act 1984, as amended. The purpose of the insolvency payments scheme is to protect certain outstanding pay-related entitlements due to employees in the event of the insolvency of their employer. These include wages, holiday pay, sick pay, payment in lieu of minimum notice and certain pension contributions.

All such claims are subject to the conditions and limits laid out in the Protection of Employees (Employer’s Insolvency) Act, 1984 as amended.

Defined pension claims have been received in respect of some former employees of Mc-

Cormick Macnaughton. There are complex legal issues involved on which the Department is seeking legal advice. The matter will be kept under continuing review.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Departmental Programmes

187. **Deputy Pat Casey** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the progression rates of each job activation programme including JobPath by region in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [22761/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The information requested is currently being compiled by my Department and will be provided to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Community Employment Schemes Funding

188. **Deputy Pat Casey** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the measures being taken to ensure that community employment schemes are adequately budgeted to meet their obligations in view of the high rise in insurance costs; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [22762/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The annual budget provided to Community Employment (CE) schemes includes an amount to cover consumable services and materials, including insurance, necessary for the effective operation of the project.

The responsibility for insuring CE schemes rests with the CE sponsoring organisation (the legal employer). My Department is aware that there has been an increase in insurance premiums for CE schemes over recent years. The main reason cited for this is an increase in claims frequency by such schemes. In the first instance, my Department recommends that schemes seek alternative quotes to ensure they get value for money. Also, if CE schemes are not filling their contracted number of participants, it is recommended that they align their insurance requirement with actual participant numbers.

Insurance premium costs are reimbursed from the CE materials budget for the scheme. However, if a scheme is experiencing particular difficulties with insurance costs, the Sponsor should contact their local DEASP officer to discuss the issue.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Departmental Staff Data

189. **Deputy Pat Casey** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the staffing numbers and roles in each Intreo office in County Wicklow; the number of jobs advisers in each of her Department's offices in County Wicklow; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [22763/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The following table shows the number of permanent staff working in my Department's offices in

County Wicklow as at the end of April 2018.

Location	Staff	Full-time equivalent
Arklow	32	30.55
Bray	46	43.44
Wicklow Town	7	6.80
Total	85	80.79

Due to the multi-faceted nature of the work undertaken by the staff in the Department, it is not possible to give a breakdown of the roles undertaken in each office.

The role of job advisor is analogous to that of a Case Officer in my Department's Intreo service. The number of Case Officers in my Department's offices in Wicklow is contained in the following table.

Location	Staff	FTE
Arklow	3	2.6
Bray	5	4.3
Wicklow Town	2	2.0
Total	10	8.9

Social Welfare Appeals

190. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the progress to date in the determination of an appeal in the case of a person (details supplied); when a decision will issue; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [22772/18]

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 registered in that office on 18 April 2018. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant papers and comments by or on behalf of the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought from the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection. These papers have been received in the Social Welfare Appeals Office on 2 May 2018 and the case will be referred to an Appeals Officer who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for 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.

Social Welfare Benefits Eligibility

191. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if assistance is available to a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [22773/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The person concerned has been advised to contact the Designated Officer on next Thursday 24 May 2018 between 10.30am and 12 noon, at Kenmare Intreo Centre, Bridge Street, Kenmare, Co.

Kerry. The Designated Officer will review the person's circumstances and means and determine if they are entitled to any supports. If they have taken up employment by then this contact with our Community Welfare Service can be made by telephone

Jobseeker's Allowance Appeals

192. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if an appeal for a jobseeker's payment by a person (details supplied) will be expedited; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [22774/18]

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 registered in that office on 9 April 2018. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant papers and comments by or on behalf of the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought from the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection. These papers have been received in the Social Welfare Appeals Office on 14 May 2018 and the case will be referred to an Appeals Officer who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for 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.

Departmental Reports

193. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if her Department has calculated the estimated cost to the State of bogus self-employment per annum; if so, the potential cost per annum; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [22786/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The report on "The use of intermediary-type structures and self-employment arrangements: Implications for Social Insurance and Tax Revenues" was published on 31 January 2018. This followed a public consultation which received 24 submissions from interested parties, including employers, trade unions, professional bodies and individuals.

The report found that the available data does not indicate that self-employment is accounting for any significant increased share of the labour force, and accordingly the perception of the level of disguised employment or false self-employment may be overstated. While the report indicates that intermediary employment arrangements can be abused to the detriment of workers and can distort the transparent and efficient operation of the labour market, it also notes that contract for service arrangements can provide flexibility, in many instances, for both businesses and workers, where they are freely chosen by both parties.

The report estimates potential losses based on various employment and earnings scenarios. The potential loss from various self-employment arrangements ranges from c €5,000 per annum at average industrial earnings, c €9,000 per annum at an earnings level of €60,000 and c €15,000 per annum at a salary of €100,000.

There are an estimated 15,000 people employed in personal service companies and man-

aged service companies. The estimated gain to the Exchequer and Social Insurance Fund would be between €30 and €60 million per annum if a proportion of these workers (25 to 50 per cent) were employed under a contract of service and subject to PAYE.

On 7 May last, my Department began a significant campaign through national media on false self-employment, to raise awareness of the service it provides to determine people's correct employment status. This campaign, which was recommended in the report, is aimed at ensuring that there is better public awareness of the important service the Department provides in determining employment status. The campaign response should help the Department in better understanding the scale and nature of false self-employment.

Rural Social Scheme Eligibility

194. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the reason a person (details supplied) cannot obtain another year on the rural social scheme. [22805/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The rural social scheme (RSS) provides opportunities for farmers and fishermen/women who are currently in receipt of specified social welfare payments to work to provide certain services of benefit to rural communities. To remain eligible to participate on the scheme the participant must be actively farming or fishing and have an underlying entitlement to Farm/Fish Assistance/Jobseekers Allowance.

The RSS is a supplementary income support scheme designed specifically for those whose income falls below a certain limit. One of the conditions pertaining to the scheme is the requirement to satisfy a means test. The means assessment for RSS includes income that the participant and their spouse, civil partner or cohabitant has and in addition to any capital or property (except their own home). Payment of RSS is not taken into account when assessing the weekly means. Unfortunately, there is no provision to allow a participant to remain on the scheme if they do not satisfy the eligibility criteria, when their current contract expired.

If the person in question has new or additional information to warrant a change in the means already assessed he should notify my Department immediately. A further review will be carried out by my Department on receipt of any new facts relating to the persons means which should be supported by documentary evidence.

Departmental Schemes

195. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the financial supports in place for unemployed persons eligible for, and in receipt of, jobseeker's allowance to transition into educational opportunities in respect of upskilling for employment for higher level diplomas and other qualifications; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [22814/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Back to Education Allowance (BTEA) is designed to support certain recipients of social welfare payments to pursue courses of education with the objective of improving their chances of accessing work. To qualify, a customer must satisfy a number of conditions such as, inter alia, being a certain age, in receipt of a prescribed social welfare payment for a specified time period, and pursuing a full-time course of study leading to a recognised qualification in a recognised

college.

With respect to jobseekers, the qualifying period for the second level option is three months while the qualifying period for third level courses is nine months prior to the date of commencement of the course. A person awarded statutory redundancy may access BTEA immediately, provided an entitlement to a relevant social welfare payment is established. Periods on eligible social welfare payments that are not broken by more than twelve months can be combined in determining the required qualifying period for BTEA.

A Higher level diploma (H.Dip) in any discipline can be approved for jobseekers. However, applicants holding a qualification at tertiary education level (certificate, diploma, primary degree or post graduate qualification) are not approved under the BTEA to pursue a course at a similar or lower qualification level. Nonetheless, the BTEA may be approved if a person holds a level 8 Honours degree and wishes to pursue a Higher Diploma at Level 8.

BTEA is not intended to be an alternative form of funding for people entering or re-entering the third level education system. The Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI) Grant, payable by the Department of Education and Skills, represents the primary support for persons pursuing education. The eligibility rules that govern the payment of a student maintenance grant are a matter for that Department.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Jobseeker's Payments

196. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if the jobseeker's payment to education sector employees with integrated pension arrangements of which the State pension, contributory, forms a component part in the period between a contractually specified retirement date on or around a persons 65th birthday and 66th birthday will continue to be made to those who do not opt to participate in the temporary retention arrangement set out in Department of Education and Skills circular 0027/2018; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [22848/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): There is no statutory retirement age in the State, and the age at which employees retire is a matter for the contract of employment between them and their employers.

The Social Welfare and Pensions Act 2011 provides that State pension age will be increased gradually to 68 years. This began in January 2014 with the standardising of State pension age for all at 66 years and the cessation of State pension transition. The State pension age will increase to 67 years in 2021 and to 68 years in 2028.

Where a person exits the workforce before reaching State pension age they may apply for either the jobseeker's benefit or jobseeker's allowance schemes. Jobseeker's payments are paid to eligible jobseekers aged 18 to 66 years. The State pensions both contributory and non-contributory are both paid from age 66. As such a person cannot receive a jobseekers payment and the State pension at the same time.

People in receipt of a jobseeker's payment must engage with my Department's activation measures and can face sanctions if they fail to do so. However, from January 2014 these criteria were eased for people aged 62 and over. They are still able to voluntarily avail of an array of supports, which are available from my Department if they wish to return to work, training or education. Furthermore, the majority of these individuals will have to register with their local

office only once a year and their payments will be paid directly into their bank accounts.

Once a person has exhausted their entitlement to jobseeker's benefit they may be eligible for jobseeker's allowance, subject to the means test and other qualifying conditions. However, in the case as described above where someone claims jobseeker's benefit payment after their 65th birthday, they would continue to be eligible for that payment until reaching State pension age which is currently 66 years of age and therefore, they would not need to make a claim for jobseeker's allowance.

Wind Energy Guidelines

197. **Deputy Pat Casey** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the reason for the delay in publishing the wind farm planning guidelines; the reason for the current policy towards onshore industrial size wind farming in sensitive landscapes such as County Wicklow; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22753/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): My Department is currently undertaking a focused review of the 2006 Wind Energy Development Guidelines. These Guidelines offer advice to planning authorities on planning for onshore wind energy through the development plan process and in determining applications for planning permission. The Guidelines are also intended to ensure a consistency of approach throughout the country in the identification of suitable locations for wind energy development.

As part of the overall review of these Guidelines, a strategic environmental assessment (SEA) is being undertaken on the revised Guidelines before they come into effect, in accordance with the requirements of EU Directive 2001/24/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment, otherwise known as the SEA Directive.

SEA is a process by which environmental considerations are required to be fully integrated into the preparation of plans and programmes which act as frameworks for development consent, prior to their final adoption, with public consultation as part of that process. Following a tendering process, my Department appointed SEA experts in December 2017 to assist in this regard. It is expected that a public consultation on the revised draft Guidelines, together with the comprehensive environmental report, will be commenced before end-Q2 this year, with the aim of issuing the finalised Guidelines, following detailed analysis and consideration of the submissions and views received during the consultation phase, later in 2018.

When finalised, the revised Guidelines will be issued under Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. Planning authorities, and, where applicable, An Bord Pleanála must have regard to guidelines issued under Section 28 in the performance of their functions generally under the Planning Acts. In the meantime, the current 2006 Wind Energy Development Guidelines remain in force.

Expert Panel on Concrete Blocks

198. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the status of the report of the expert group on mica published in 2017; if he will respond to a group's (details supplied) invitation to launch the publication of recommendations Nos. 1 and 2 in County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22737/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government

(Deputy Damien English): I have received the correspondence referred to by the Deputy, and a reply to the correspondence has been issued from my Department.

The Expert Panel on concrete blocks was established by my Department in 2016, to investigate problems that have emerged in the concrete blockwork of certain dwellings in Counties Donegal and Mayo.

The panel had the following terms of reference:

(i) To identify, insofar as it is possible, the numbers of private dwellings which appear to be affected by defects in the blockwork in the Counties of Donegal and Mayo;

(ii) To carry out a desktop study, which would include a consultation process with affected homeowners, public representatives, local authorities, product manufacturers, building professionals, testing laboratories, industry stakeholders and other relevant parties, to establish the nature of the problem in the affected dwellings;

(iii) To outline a range of technical options for remediation and the means by which those technical options could be applied; and

(iv) To submit a report within six months.

On 13 June 2017, the report of the Expert Panel was published and included eight recommendations which my Department are actively progressing with the relevant stakeholders.

My Department is prioritising the implementation of Recommendations 1 and 2.

With regard to Recommendation 1, the National Standards Authority of Ireland (NSAI) Technical Committee, established to scope and fast track the development of a standardised protocol, held its inaugural meeting on 11 September 2017 and has held several further meetings since. The standardised protocol will inform the course of action in relation to remedial works for all affected householders. My Department understands from the NSAI that the Technical Committee is in the process of finalising the standardised protocol, which will be available for public consultation in the coming weeks and will run for a period of six weeks.

With regard to Recommendation 2, my Department has been in contact with Engineers Ireland in relation to the establishment of a register of competent engineers for homeowners/affected parties' reference. Engineers Ireland have provided assurance that they will collaborate with the Department, the NSAI and others on measures to establish such a register once the standardised protocol is in place.

Last year I visited Donegal and Mayo and met with key stakeholders, including affected homeowners, elected members and officials of the local authorities and other interested parties. On 18 December 2017, I again visited Donegal and met with key stakeholders to provide an update on the progress to date. I made a similar visit to Mayo on 26 January 2018.

I would be pleased to accept the invitation to visit Donegal again, once the standardised protocol is in place, in order to provide a further update on progress at that time.

In addition, and in light of the information contained in the report, I am currently considering what further actions may be required to assist the parties directly involved in reaching a satisfactory resolution to the problems that have emerged in the two counties.

199. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the details of new voters on the supplementary register by local authority; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22760/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy John Paul Phelan): The number of electors included on the supplement to the register of electors in advance of the forthcoming referendum is 118,389. A breakdown is available, by local authority area, on my Department's website at the following link: http://www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/publications/files/supplement_to_register_-_may_2018.pdf.

Local Authority Housing Funding

200. **Deputy Pat Casey** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the budget allocated to each local authority house building programme in each year since 2002 in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22775/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Annual expenditure under the local authority construction programme, i.e. standard construction, turnkeys and rapid delivery, for the period 2005 to 2017, and to date in 2018, is set out in the following table. The data is provided from 2005 onwards in order to align with the introduction of my Department's current financial management system during 2004.

The breakdown of the data at individual local authority level over the 14 year period is not readily available. However, if the Deputy is concerned about a specific local authority or local authorities, I will have the matter explored further on receipt of the relevant information.

Year	Total Expenditure
2005	€548.415m
2006	€547.451m
2007	€418.519m
2008	€508.105m
2009	€374.003m
2010	€142.540m
2011	€58.512m
2012	€51.707m
2013	€29.620m
2014	€24.623m
2015	€32.570m
2016	€46.477m
2017	€164.388m
2018 (to 18 May)	€93.704m

In addition to standard construction, turnkeys and rapid delivery mechanisms, local authorities also deliver social housing through dedicated regeneration programmes which seek to address the causes of disadvantage in communities through a holistic programme of physical, social and economic regeneration. Total expenditure under the National Regeneration Programme by local authorities over the period 2005 to 2017, and to date in 2018, is set out in the following table.

Year	Total Expenditure
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2005	€119.903m
2006	€74.465m
2007	€94.128m
2008	€126.479m
2009	€107.134m
2010	€116.989m
2011	€118.185m
2012	€100.616m
2013	€69.431m
2014	€46.878m
2015	€48.801m
2016	€50.054m
2017	€65.186m
2018 (to 18 May)	€25.113m

Public Relations Contracts Expenditure

201. **Deputy Pat Casey** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the expenditure on the Rebuilding Ireland website and public relations since its inception in 2016; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22782/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): My Department has not incurred any expenditure on public relations since 2016. My Department's Press Office provides public relations services and the engagement of external expertise is generally only considered where the issues involved require specific expert skills that are not readily available within the Department.

With regard to the Government's Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness, a key part of its successful implementation is ensuring that all stakeholders and the wider public are fully aware of the commitments, understand the range of initiatives and actions being rolled out, and can access relevant and up-to-date information and reporting on progress. In this context, the overall cost to date of the consultation, communication and engagement strategy associated with Rebuilding Ireland is approximately €156,000 (incl. VAT). This includes:

- the development and management of a dedicated Rebuilding Ireland website, www.rebuildingireland.ie, for which total investment to date has been approximately €92,800 (incl. VAT);
- in addition to the standard provision of text and graphic information to view and download, the facilitation of engagement with the general public through the use of video presentations and social media, at a cost of approximately €61,000 (incl. VAT) to date; and
- costs of approximately €2,200 which arose in relation to one of a number of Pillar specific launches which took place during the launch phase of the Action Plan to build implementation momentum by allowing for a deeper focus on specific Pillar areas.

Water Services Infrastructure

202. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Gov-

ernment when he plans for water to be brought to Murrisk and Lecanvey, County Mayo (details supplied); and his further plans to ensure this project is part of Irish Water's capital plan. [22841/18]

203. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if it is part of the medium-term planning of Irish Water to pipe water from Westport to Louisburgh, County Mayo, and to bring clean drinking water to all areas in between. [22842/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I propose to take Questions Nos. 202 and 203 together.

Since 1 January 2014, Irish Water has statutory responsibility for all aspects of water services planning, delivery and operation at national, regional and local levels. Irish Water, as a single publicly owned national water services authority, is taking a strategic, nationwide national utility approach to asset planning and investment, and meeting customer requirements.

Irish Water's Water Services Strategic Plan (WSSP) published in 2015 sets out the strategic objectives for its delivery of water services over 25 years up to 2040 in order to ensure the provision of clean safe drinking water, effective management of wastewater, environmental protection and support for social and economic development. The Irish Water Business Plan, Transforming Water Services in Ireland to 2021 (also published in 2015), sets out its short to medium term planning in implementing the first phase of the Water Services Strategic Plan.

Irish Water is regulated by the Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU) as the independent economic regulator. The CRU is responsible for setting the total level of revenue which Irish Water can receive, through Government subvention and from customers, to cover its efficiently incurred costs. This CRU process involves, *inter alia*, reviewing submissions from Irish Water, including on its investment plan, and thereafter setting appropriate revenue allowances for operating costs, capital costs and other items for given regulatory periods. Consequently, the actual allowed operational expenditure and capital investment is decided by the CRU.

On 21 May 2018, I published the Water Services Policy Statement 2018-2025 following its approval by Government. The Policy Statement gives clear direction to strategic planning and decision making on water and wastewater services in Ireland. The Policy Statement sets out a series of high-level policy objectives across the three thematic areas of Quality, Conservation, and Future Proofing, which must be pursued when planning capital investment and framing current spending plans. The Policy Statement is available on my Department's website at the following link:

www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/publications/files/water_services_policy_statement_2018-2025_0.pdf.

Within 3 months of publication of the Policy Statement, Irish Water must prepare a 'Strategic Funding Plan' setting out proposed operational and capital expenditure. Subject to its approval by me as Minister, the Strategic Funding Plan will ultimately feed into annual Exchequer decisions on spending.

Based on this Strategic Funding Plan, Irish Water's next Capital Investment Plan for the five year period from 2020 to 2024 will set out the financial plan for capital investments to support Irish Water's strategic objectives, as set out in the WSSP and in its Business Plan, to deliver improvements to water services where they are needed most. Irish Water will also take account of developing subsidiary programmes within its investment plan to assist in implementing the National Planning Framework and the National Development Plan including the forthcoming Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies as well as ongoing reviews of local authority

statutory land use plans. It is in that context that investment decisions in relation to individual projects will be made.

In the context of the Rural Water Programme my Department made enquiries with Mayo County Council which indicate that the Council recently engaged with the Murrisk and Lecanvey community with a view to them forming a Group Water Scheme for the area subject to co-funding under my Department's Rural Water Programme. Such a Group Water Scheme for the area would be sourced from a public water connection provided by Irish Water. I understand that the Rural Water Section of the Council continue to be available to engage with the community on this option.

Planning Appeals

204. **Deputy Jan O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if there is a significant backlog in the time taken for An Bord Pleanála to deal with appeals; the average waiting time before appeals are decided; if priority is given to applications that go directly to the board; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22856/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Under Section 126 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, An Bord Pleanála has a statutory objective to determine planning appeals within 18 weeks. Where the Board does not consider it possible or appropriate to reach a decision within 18 weeks (e.g. because of the particular complexities of a case or the requirement to hold an oral hearing), it will inform the parties of the reasons for this, and will indicate when it intends to make its decision.

Measured on an annual basis, the compliance rate with the statutory objective period for normal planning appeals was 64% in 2017, and the average time taken to determine those cases was 16.8 weeks, down from a 82% compliance rate and an average determination time of 15.5 weeks in 2016. The reduction in the compliance rate can be attributed to a number of factors.

Firstly, there was a reduction in Board capacity in mid-2017, arising from a time interval between the departure of five outgoing Board members, whose terms of office had expired in April and May, and the five new replacement Board members taking up their posts. While by September 2017 the Board complement had been fully replenished, this time interval impacted on the Board's case work output.

In addition, An Bord Pleanála is also implementing a major ICT strategy which will facilitate the introduction of on-line planning services as part of a complete upgrade and replacement of core systems. In this regard, a new case management system was installed and became operational in Q4 2017. As is to be expected with such a fundamental and integrated project, the transition to the new system has caused some initial disruption to the processing of cases, resulting in a further increase in the backlog of cases on hand. However, measures are being put in place to ensure that the new system is bedded down and becomes operational at an optimal level.

Furthermore, during this period, there has been a general increase in cases received by the Board. For example, there was an increase of almost 12% on normal planning appeals received in 2017 compared to 2016. This upward trend has continued into 2018.

Now that the Board's full complement has been restored, combined with the measures that are being put in place in relation to the new ICT systems, it is expected that the backlog of cases will begin to reduce over the coming months, with an associated improvement in the compliance rate with the statutory objective period.

In relation to priority cases being dealt with by the Board, since July 2017, the Board has been determining planning applications for strategic housing developments (SHDs) made directly to it within the 16-week timeframe prescribed for such planning applications under the provisions of the Planning and Development (Housing) and Residential Tenancies Act 2016. At end-April 2018, 24 SHD planning applications had been made, with the Board issuing decisions in 16 cases, all of which were made within the prescribed 16-week timeframe.

Importantly, having regard to these additional functions, a new Strategic Housing Division of the Board has been established to decide on these applications, involving the recruitment of an additional dedicated 10 professional and administrative staff members in 2017. Two additional Board members have also been sanctioned to serve this Division, with the first Board appointment being made in February this year and the second Board member due to take up duty in June.

In addition, in line with Government policy in relation to the provision of housing supply, all planning appeals in respect of housing developments of 30 units or more are prioritised by the Board for decision. The Board also prioritises developments which have a significant employment or economic potential on a national, regional or local scale as well as new, and extensions to, school buildings and educational facilities.

Film Industry Development

205. **Deputy Pat Casey** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the measures being taken to expand the film industry in the mid-east region in view of the sale of the 32% shareholding in a studio (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [22752/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): The sale of the shareholding in the studio referred to by the Deputy is first and foremost a matter for my colleague, the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation, Deputy Heather Humphreys.

Minister Humphreys did however consult me about the matter and both of us welcomed the acquisition of the studios to by a company which proposes to invest in the facility in the future.

The Government's capital investment plan Investing in our Culture, Language and Heritage 2018- 2027 provides for funding of €200m to be invested in media production and audio visual industries through the Irish Film Board over the next 10 years which will have a positive impact right across the country.

This will assist in realising the vision under Pillar 4 of the Creative Ireland Programme to develop Ireland as a centre of excellence in media production. In the coming period, the Government hopes to publish a Plan for the Audiovisual Industry which will set out in greater detail how it is proposed to develop the industry further.

Údarás na Gaeltachta Data

206. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the number of Údarás na Gaeltachta jobs created per county in 2017, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [22778/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Joe McHugh): The information requested by the Deputy is outlined in the following table.

Questions - Written Answers

County	New Jobs created in 2017
Dún na nGall	243
Maigh Eo	60
Gaillimh	211
An Mhí	8
Ciarraí	64
Corcaigh	34
Port Láirge	10
Total	630

23 May 2018