

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 36, inclusive, resubmitted.

Questions Nos. 37 to 45, inclusive, answered orally.

Health Services Staff Remuneration

46. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Health the role of his Department in approving an increased salary level for a CEO of a section 38 organisation that has been unable to recruit a suitable candidate at the approved rate of pay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21673/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In 2015, my Department completed a review of the appropriate salary levels for the CEOs of Section 38 funded agencies, in conjunction with the HSE and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. The review came about as a result of a recommendation made in the HSE's Internal Audit Report on remuneration of senior managers in Section 38 agencies. This recommendation stated that a review of the remuneration rates of CEOs and senior management was required for a number of organisations, particularly in the social care area, to ensure pay rates reflect the comparable size, scale and complexity of each organisation.

Where a Section 38 organisation can demonstrate that it has attempted to fill a post but has been unsuccessful in attracting suitable applicants, there may be grounds for a business case to be made to the HSE to seek an increase in the remuneration level payable. If the HSE were supportive, it would then be considered by my Department. Given the senior level of the post in question, sanction would also be required from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

I understand that the Deputy has already made representations in relation to one specific agency, KARE. I am aware that this is not the only agency in this sector experiencing this challenge. My officials have sought a meeting with colleagues in the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform to explore the issue further. As outlined any change to the approved salary attaching to a CEO position requires the submission of a business case to the HSE and the approval of both my Department and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

Questions Nos. 47 and 48 answered orally.

Hospital Staff Data

49. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 388 of 5 December 2017, the staff that have been recruited to enable St. Finbarr's Ward, UHG to support an orthopaedic elective service at the hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23457/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Elective orthopaedic services are provided at Merlin Park Hospital.

The Deputy will be aware that in September 2017, leaks developed in the roof of the building that houses the two orthopaedic theatres at Merlin Park Hospital. This necessitated the closure of both theatres in the interest of patient safety. The Saolta University Healthcare Group, with a view to retaining elective orthopaedic services within Galway University Hospitals, transferred a number of staff to University Hospital Galway, as an interim measure. In that regard, 8 elective orthopaedic beds were opened in St Finbarr's ward and these operated from October 2017 to March 2018.

Works on the repairs of the roof at Merlin Park have now been completed. Consequently, staff who had transferred temporarily to St. Finbarr's Ward have returned to Merlin Park where elective orthopaedic surgery has recommenced. The Deputy may wish to note that there are now 25 elective orthopaedic beds, comprising 21 inpatient beds and 4 day beds, at the hospital and these beds have been in operation since March last.

Finally, I should mention that the HSE has submitted a proposal to the Department for the development of increased bed capacity across the system, and this includes a submission from Saolta University Health Care Group. This proposal is part of a general submission from the HSE to identify the location and mix of beds across the hospital system which can be opened and staffed this year, and into 2019, in order to improve preparedness for Winter 2018/19. Consideration of the proposal is at an early stage.

Questions Nos. 50 and 51 answered orally.

Hospital Appointments Delays

52. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Health the reason more than 10,000 persons had been waiting over a year for an outpatient appointment in Galway University Hospital in April 2018. [23511/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I acknowledge that Outpatient waiting times are often unacceptably long and I am conscious of the burden that this places on patients and their families.

Each year 3.3 million patients attend Hospital Outpatient clinics for appointments, with demand for services growing year-on-year. A key component of the management of waiting lists by hospitals is the categorisation of patients by clinical priority to ensure that all patients receive care in timely and clinically appropriate matter.

The HSE Service Plan 2018 sets out a target that 80% of patients waiting for a first outpatient appointment will be seen within a 52 week wait timeframe.

In 2017, Galway University Hospital had over 246,000 Outpatient Department attendances. This was the highest outpatient attendance of any individual hospital across the country. Based upon HSE figures for March 2018 that show Galway University Hospital is seeing over 73% outpatients within 52 weeks, further improvement is being pursued by the Hospital to achieve

national targets for 2018.

The HSE is working with the National Treatment Purchase Fund and my Department to finalise a joint plan focused on improving overall use of resources to tackle long patient waiting times and ensuring timely access to treatment and care for our patients. I hope to publish this Plan shortly. As part of this process the National Treatment Purchase Fund and the HSE are currently reviewing proposals from hospitals for outpatient initiatives, including in respect of Galway University Hospital.

Health Service Capacity Review

53. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the extent to which the State will provide the 13,000 extra residential care beds that the Health Service Capacity Review anticipates will be required; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23504/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): Residential care is provided through a mix of public, private and voluntary provision. At present the Nursing Homes Support Scheme provides financial support to approximately 23,000 people in long term nursing home care.

The Capacity Review noted that if key reforms and productivity measures are implemented, 13,000 extra residential care beds will be required by 2031 to meet the demands of our growing and ageing population.

Public residential care facilities are an essential part of our health infrastructure. There are approximately 5,000 long stay and 2,000 short stay public beds across the country. The Government is committed to investing in additional capacity and making tangible reforms to our model of healthcare delivery as outlined in the Capacity Review. Programmes to increase capacity are already underway including the on-going Capital Investment Programme 2016-2021 for Community Nursing Units. The National Development Plan provides for an extra 4,500 additional public short-term and long-term beds over the next 10 years.

Significant new programmes or projects included in the NDP, including residential beds, reflect the next stage of health sector development. Important policy scoping and planning assessment will need to be carried out, which will involve close co-operation between Hospital Groups, CHOs and local planning authorities where relevant, guided by the appropriate model of care developments.

Hospital Equipment

54. **Deputy Eugene Murphy** asked the Minister for Health if the walk-in x-ray facility is still operational at Roscommon University Hospital; if not, the reason for the withdrawal of the service; the x-ray facilities that are currently available at the hospital; the date on which the walk-in x-ray facility will be fully restored at the hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23146/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Saolta University Health Care Group has advised that an equipment failure in recent weeks has impacted the X-Ray Walk-In Service at Roscommon University Hospital. Normally, GPs refer patients with non-injury related conditions directly to this Walk-In Service. To facilitate partial continuation of the service, the hospital has leased mobile x-ray equipment on a temporary basis. While continuing to provide

chest x-rays, the hospital has asked GPs, as an interim measure, to refer patients who require non-urgent x-rays, to other hospitals in the region. However, I have been advised that the Walk-In Service will be fully restored by the end of July.

Saolta University Health Care Group has confirmed that the operation of the Minor Injuries Unit is unaffected by the equipment failure and that patients who attend the clinic continue to receive x-rays as necessary.

The Deputy will be pleased to note that funding for the replacement of general x-ray equipment was allocated to Roscommon University Hospital in January 2018. This x-ray equipment is on order and work is currently underway on the infrastructure required to accommodate the new equipment. Saolta University Healthcare Group anticipates that the new x-ray equipment will be in place by the end of July 2018.

Cancer Screening Programmes

55. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the steps being taken to establish a redress scheme for the women and surviving families affected by the cervical cancer screening scandal; the role of the State Claims Agency in this matter; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21619/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I am determined that the best result will be delivered for the affected women and their families. Therefore, it is essential to establish the facts and to agree the actions needed to address the issues raised by the Deputy. It is also important to restore the trust and confidence of women in CervicalCheck.

An independent Scoping Inquiry is being undertaken by Dr Gabriel Scally, President of the Epidemiology and Public Health section of the Royal Society of Medicine, and he is expected to issue his first report at the beginning of June, with his final report by the end of that month.

Separately, there will also be an International Clinical Expert Review panel led by the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists. This will be supported by expert input from the British Society of Colposcopists and Cervical Pathologists. This panel will review the results of screening tests of all women who have developed cervical cancer and who participated in CervicalCheck since its establishment. It will provide independent clinical assurance to women about the timing of their diagnosis and any issues relating to their treatment and outcome.

These two strands of investigation are crucial to firstly establish the facts, secondly determine what action is needed to address the issues, and thirdly help to restore trust and confidence of women in CervicalCheck.

Also, I intend to engage with the Minister for Justice and Equality and the Minister for Finance on whether further improvements can be made to the legal framework governing the management of medical negligence cases.

The State Claims Agency, which comes under the aegis of the Department of Finance, has a statutory responsibility to manage clinical negligence claims under the Clinical Indemnity Scheme.

The Agency acknowledges that its work frequently involves the management of difficult, complex and traumatic cases taken by persons who have suffered injury, sometimes a catastrophic injury.

The Agency states that in managing these cases it is committed to placing a high priority on treating those who have made claims and their families with the dignity and the compassion they deserve. It recognises that it has a duty to manage each claim in a humane, sensitive, ethical and professional manner.

At this time and in advance of the compilation and consideration of the necessary facts and information it is considered premature to propose any future role for the Agency.

Hospital Waiting Lists Action Plans

56. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the extent to which he continues to monitor the waiting lists throughout the health service with particular reference to specific procedures such as miscellaneous orthopaedic, cardiac, neurological or other procedures; if the utilisation of the treatment purchase scheme can be used to clear backlogs in the first instance thereby facilitating smoothness and efficiency throughout the service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23464/18]

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 National Treatment Purchase Fund (or NTPF) to provide treatment for patients. The Inpatient/Day Case Action Plan 2018, which was published in April, outlines the combined approach of the HSE and the NTPF in 2018 to reducing the number of patients waiting for treatment.

The Action Plan has been developed to ensure an appropriate balance between high volume activities and offering treatment to complex long waiting patients, with 20,000 additional Inpatient and Daycase procedures to be funded by the NTPF in 2018. For all procedures, NTPF authorisations are made in respect of the longest waiting patients first.

Within this 20,000, for very long waiting patients, including those waiting for more complex procedures such as those referred to by the Deputy, the NTPF is engaging with the HSE and public hospitals to seek solutions and plans to fund the treatment of 1,200 patients in 2018 through this mechanism.

In addition, my Department has placed a particular priority on performance improvement in scheduled and unscheduled care in order to improve access for patients. At the end of 2017, a new Unit was established in my Department with a remit to work with the HSE and the NTPF and provide strategic direction and performance oversight in this area. Ongoing oversight of the performance of the HSE and the NTPF against targets set out in the plan is a key function of this Unit. The NTPF provides a weekly update to my Department on Inpatient, Day case and Outpatient waiting lists and regular review meetings are held with the HSE and the NTPF.

Emergency Departments

57. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the reason for the substantial increase in overcrowding in Mayo University Hospital emergency department over the first four months of 2018 relative to the same period in 2017. [23517/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In the context of a difficult winter for our health services, exacerbated by the adverse weather associated with Storm Emma, the first four months of the year saw a higher overall level of trolleys nationally, up 13.9%, as compared

with the same period last year. This increase reflects a rise in demand for unscheduled care, characterised by increased attendances and admissions, in particular, from those in the over 75 age group.

In relation to Mayo University Hospital, there was a sharp increase in trolley numbers of over 130% between January and April 2018, compared to the same period last year. I am advised by the HSE that the key drivers for this significant increase were:

- an 8% increase in overall ED attendances;
- a 15% rise in attendances of people over 75 years of age;
- a 13.7% rise in overall admissions, and;
- a rise of 15.1% in admissions of the over 75 age group, whose needs tend to be more complex leading to a longer length of stay.

As Minister for Health, I am committed to continuing the effort to address overcrowding in our EDs, and in particular, improving the capacity of the system to respond during periods of peak demand, such as winter. In this context, I have asked my Department to work with the HSE to identify the location and mix of beds across the hospital system which can be opened and staffed this year and into 2019 in order to improve preparedness for Winter 2018/2019.

Moreover, the Government has approved a record level of capital investment in health at €10.9 billion over the next 10 years. This will provide for a major enhancement of the capacity of our health services to meet demand.

Finally, a review of the Winter Initiative 2017/2018 is being undertaken, which will inform a 3 year plan for unscheduled care, as well as supporting the provision of additional capacity in Winter 2018/19.

Hospital Services

58. **Deputy Bobby Aylward** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding his commitment to examine a number of proposals to improve cardiac care in the south east, including the deployment of a modular laboratory that will allow for diagnostic angiograms and intervention procedures; the status of efforts by UHW management to recruit additional staff to extend the operation of the existing cath lab by 20%; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23527/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Following an independent review of the need for a second cath lab in University Hospital Waterford, the Herity report concluded that the needs of the effective catchment population for Waterford University Hospital could be accommodated within a single cath lab. Funding has been provided to support extension of the existing cath lab operating hours to 12 weekly sessions per week, or by 20%, as recommended in the Herity Report.

As the Deputy is aware, a mobile cath lab has been deployed since October 2017, initially for a period of 20 weeks but since extended twice (most recently on 23 April) to allow time for University Hospital Waterford to complete recruitment of the additional staff required for the service extension to the existing cath lab.

The HSE has advised that the posts required to facilitate the service extension to the existing cath lab were originally envisaged to be reduced Whole Time Equivalent posts, that is, all posts

were 0.25 WTE, with the exception of the nursing post at 0.75 WTE. These posts have now been designated as full Whole Time Equivalents, approval and funding has been provided for these posts and recruitment is currently being progressed by the National Recruitment Service.

A modular cath lab has also been proposed, as an interim solution pending the outcome of the National Review of Specialist Cardiac Services, and my Department is currently examining this proposal at my request.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services

59. **Deputy Pat Casey** asked the Minister for Health the timeframe for bringing the child and adolescent mental health services in CHO6 to the level envisaged in *A Vision for Change*. [23577/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): The Government is strongly committed to developing all aspects of mental health services, including the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) envisaged under *A Vision for Change*. This is being delivered by the HSE in the context of its agreed annual Service Plans. Significant progress has been made over recent years, underpinned by additional funding since 2012 to develop mental health services overall. Funding for mental health in 2018 amounts to €910m, including €35m approved in Budget 2018.

HSE CAMHS has standardised operational procedures which support timely access to services. This is based on professional clinical assessment and prioritisation to address the mental health needs of all children presenting to this specialist service. Despite increasing demands overall on CAMHS, irrespective of the source of referrals, individual cases assessed as urgent receive priority.

There are currently 69 CAMHS teams and three Paediatric Liaison Teams, of which seven CAMHS teams are in place in CHO6 .

Staffing levels in the CAMHS teams vary in CHO6 but are below levels recommended in *A Vision for Change*. CAMHS teams in this area are at 57% of *A Vision for Change* recommendations. At present, there is a European shortage of appropriately trained Consultant Psychiatrists, and allied health professionals, for CAMHS. This, rather than funding availability at present, is the main difficulty facing the HSE, but steady progress has been made over recent years in filling the type of posts approved to modernise our mental health service. In the circumstances, it is not possible to give a timeframe for filling vacancies in line with *A Vision for Change*.

I, in conjunction with the Department of Health and the HSE, will continue to closely monitor the development of all aspects of CAMHS services nationally, including enhanced staffing levels for teams in each CHO area.

General Practitioner Services

60. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to Irish Medical Organisation data which predicts that 41% of general practitioners in County Mayo will retire over the next five to seven years. [23542/18]

67. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to Irish Medical Organisation data which predicts that 27% of general practitioners in County Dublin will retire over the next five to seven years. [23519/18]

115. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to Irish Medical Organisation data which predicts that 30% of general practitioners in County Galway will retire over the next five to seven years. [23512/18]

123. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to Irish Medical Organisation data which predicts that almost 50% of general practitioners in County Leitrim will retire over the next five to seven years. [23515/18]

426. **Deputy Bobby Aylward** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to Irish Medical Organisation data which predicts that 42% of general practitioners in County Kilkenny will retire over the next five to seven years. [23547/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 60, 67, 115, 123 and 426 together.

The Government is committed to the continued development of GP capacity to ensure that patients across the country continue to have access to GP services, especially in remote rural areas and also in disadvantaged urban areas, and that general practice is sustainable in all areas into the future. I want to ensure that existing GP services are retained and that general practice remains an attractive career option for newly-qualified GPs.

I acknowledge the important role that GPs play in our health service and I recognise the commitment of GPs to ensuring a responsive, accessible and high-quality service to patients. The number of GPs on the specialist register continues to increase – up from 2,270 in 2010 to 3,668 as of 18 May 2018 and there are now 2,491 GPs contracted by the HSE under the GMS scheme compared to 2,098 in 2008. It should be noted that as of 1st March there were only 23 GMS panels that do not have a permanent GP in place – a vacancy rate of less than 1%.

Over the past 6 years, an average of 143 GPs per year entered the GMS scheme compared with an average of 111 GPs per year exiting the scheme for the same period. During 2016 and 2017, an average of 158 GPs per year entered the GMS Scheme compared with an average of 132 GPs per year exiting the scheme for the same period.

The Government is aware of the manpower issues facing general practice and has taken steps to increase the number of GP training places. In 2009, there were 120 General Practice training places available and this year it is expected that over 190 training places will be filled, an increase of around 60% over a nine year period. We will continue to work to improve the recruitment and retention in general practice in the coming years. Our objective is to achieve further increases in the number of GP training places in future years, and to ensure that all the available places are filled, in order to meet the future manpower needs of general practice.

Other efforts undertaken in recent years to increase the number of practicing GPs include changes to the entry provisions to the GMS scheme to accommodate more flexible contracts, and to the retirement provisions for GPs under the GMS scheme, allowing GPs to hold GMS contracts until their 72nd birthday. An enhanced supports package for rural practices has also been introduced which includes improved qualifying criteria for rural support and an increase in the financial allowance from €16,216 to €20,000 per annum.

The Government is committed to engaging with GP representatives on the development of a package of measures and reforms to modernise the current GMS contract which will benefit patients and also prove attractive to GPs. The aim is to develop a contract which has a population health focus, providing in particular for health promotion and disease prevention and for the structured ongoing care of chronic conditions. There is potential for Government expenditure on general practice to increase significantly in coming years if the consultations are successful.

Officials from my Department and the HSE met with the Irish Medical Organisation earlier this month in order to progress this agenda. Consultations with the National Association of General Practitioners are also planned.

Cancer Screening Programmes

61. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the number of calls that have been made to the CervicalCheck helpline; the number that have been returned; the number that are awaiting a return call; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23451/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As at 24 May 21,228 calls had been received by the CervicalCheck helpline, 11,341 women had requested callbacks and 10,382 women had received callbacks. The rate of call back has been steadily improving and as of 24 May stood at 92 per cent. There is a process of checking records, checking data quality and assigning the call-back to a health professional, and the Serious Incident Management Team is working closely with the Hospital Groups to ensure that women receive call backs as quickly as possible.

Daily updates from the Serious Incident Management Team, which contain figures relating to the helpline, can be found at cervicalcheck.ie .

It is important to say that CervicalCheck, despite its failings in relation to disclosure, works. The cervical screening programme has reduced the risk of women developing cervical cancer and there was a significant downward trend in the incidence of invasive cervical cancer between 2010 and 2015. Also, cervical cancers are being diagnosed at an earlier stage and five-year survival rates have improved. However, the extensive coverage of this issue has resulted in women feeling a lack of trust and confidence in CervicalCheck or having concerns about quality and the possibility of a false negative result. Where a woman has concerns, she can also consult her GP and, if necessary, have a further smear test. CervicalCheck will reimburse the GP for the consultation and any smear test and no charge will arise for the patient.

Disability Services Funding

62. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Health if he will reverse the funding cut to the Louth-Meath branch of an organisation (details supplied) for the running of the early intervention therapy programme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23523/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): As the Deputy is aware the Government and the HSE are committed to supporting children with special needs and recognises that first class early intervention services and services for school-aged children with disabilities are paramount.

Over the last number of years, the HSE has provided lottery grants to the Louth/Meath Branch of Down Syndrome Ireland.

I am advised by the HSE that in 2015 the number of lottery grant applications increased significantly on 2014 applications (200%) and it was necessary to review the amount of lottery funding to organisations, in order to accommodate the higher number of applications received.

I am further advised, that initially in 2016 a number of organisations who applied for lottery funding were advised of reductions in the grants being approved. However, following a review of the overall funding allocation process the support was restored.

The local Disability Manager met with the Louth Meath Branch of Down Syndrome Ireland and agreed the funding allocation for 2016 and subsequently for 2017.

I am informed that the HSE has also committed to continue to fund DSI Louth Meath Branch for 2018, based on the previous year's allocation in line with the criteria for allocation of the National Lottery Grants.

Services for People with Disabilities

63. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Health the supports provided by the HSE to persons affected by diseases such as polio. [23521/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose, and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy's question relates to a service issue, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

Referendum Campaigns

64. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Minister for Health if he will report on the referendum campaign on the eighth amendment. [18940/18]

117. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Health his plans to make changes to abortion laws here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23524/18]

423. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Health if he will report on his plans to implement the recommendations from the Citizens' Assembly. [22708/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 64, 117 and 423 together.

As the Deputies will be aware, on Friday 25 May 2018 the people of Ireland voted overwhelmingly in favour of deleting

Article 40.3.3 in its entirety, and substituting an article in the Constitution, the object and effect of which is to articulate clearly the principle that laws may be enacted by the Oireachtas to provide for the regulation of termination of pregnancy.

As Minister for Health, I brought a Memorandum to Government today seeking the approval of Cabinet to draft legislation regulating termination of pregnancy. This legislation will be based on the General Scheme of a Bill to Regulate Termination of Pregnancy approved by Government on 27 March 2018 (SI 180/20/10/2243) and published on my Department's website.

The provisions of the General Scheme are based on the recommendations of the Joint Committee on the Eighth Amendment of the Constitution, which was established to consider the report and recommendations of the Citizens' Assembly.

Hospital Appointments Delays

65. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Health the action which will be taken to expedite outpatient appointments for the 4,806 children that have been waiting for a consultation in Crumlin Children’s Hospital for more than 18 months. [23574/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Improving waiting times for hospital procedures and outpatient appointments is a key commitment in the programme for Government. It is acknowledged that outpatient waiting lists are a challenge which need to be addressed.

The development of a sustainable and safe paediatric orthopaedic service, including scoliosis services for children and young people has been prioritised in the 2018. An additional €9 million has been provided to the HSE in 2018 specifically to develop paediatric orthopaedic services, including increasing access to scoliosis services.

The HSE and Children’s Hospital Group developed a Paediatric Scoliosis Waiting List Action Plan for 2018 and this includes actions targeted at patients waiting longest for an outpatient appointment.

The HSE Service Plan 2018 sets out a target that 80% of patients waiting for a first outpatient appointment will be seen within a 52 week wait timeframe. HSE figures for March 2018 show that Our Lady’s Children’s Hospital Crumlin (OLCHC) are seeing 61-63% outpatients within 52 weeks.

The HSE advise that in 2017, OLCHC had 68,531 outpatient attendances. It is worth noting that in the same year, more than 10,000 (14%) patients did not attend their hospital appointments.

The most recent NTPF figures for April 2018 show that there was a total of 18,886 patients on the outpatient waiting list for OLCHC. 74% of these patients are waiting 18 months or less.

A key component of the management of waiting lists by hospitals is the categorisation of patients by clinical priority to ensure that all patients receive care in timely and clinically appropriate matter.

The HSE is working with the NTPF and my Department to finalise a joint plan focused on improving overall use of resources to tackle long patient waiting times and ensuring timely access to treatment and care for our patients. I hope to publish this Plan shortly. As part of this process the NTPF and the HSE are currently reviewing proposals from hospitals, including OLCHC for outpatient initiatives.

Emergency Departments

66. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the reason for the substantial increase in overcrowding in Connolly Hospital emergency department over the first four months of 2018 relative to the same period in 2017. [23530/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In the context of a difficult winter for our health services, further compounded by Storm Emma, the first four months of the year saw a higher level of trolleys nationally, up 13.9%, as compared to the same period in 2017. This increase reflects a rise in demand for unscheduled care across the hospital system, characterised by increased attendances and admissions, in particular, of those in the over 75 age group.

In relation to Connolly Hospital, there was a sharp increase of 148.9% in trolley numbers between January and April 2018, compared to the same period last year. This increase was in the context of a 5.8% rise in Emergency Department (ED) attendances and an 0.5% rise in admissions at the site in the first four months of the year.

Despite marginal increases in admissions since the start of 2018, the HSE has indicated that Connolly Hospital has been operating significantly above capacity, with a high level of delayed discharges for a Model 3 site and high levels of surge capacity in use on a continuous basis. Length of stay data supports the premise that the site has been operating above capacity for an extended period, with overall medical length of stays at 8.4 days and overall surgical length of stays at 4.5 days between 1 January 2018 and 28 February 2018.

At the end of 2017, the hospital had significantly increased outturns in ED attendances and admissions and high occupancy levels. According to the HSE, these factors impacted significantly on hospital performance this year, characterised by high levels of surge in use and slow patient flow, as reflected by poor patient experience times. It is worth noting that occupancy levels in Connolly Hospital in January 2018 were particularly high at 116.9%.

Against this background, and in light of the conclusions of the Health Service Capacity Review that the system will need nearly 2,600 additional acute hospital beds by 2031, I have asked my Department to work with the HSE to identify the location and mix of beds across the hospital system which can be opened and staffed this year and into 2019 in order to improve preparedness for Winter 2018/2019.

The Government has approved a record level of capital investment in health at €10.9 billion over the next 10 years. This will provide for a major enhancement of the capacity of our health services to meet demand.

Finally, a review of the Winter Initiative 2017/2018 is being undertaken, which will inform a 3 year plan for unscheduled care, as well as supporting the provision of additional capacity in Winter 2018/19

Question No. 67 answered with Question No. 60.

Services for People with Disabilities

68. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Health his views on concerns being expressed by psychologists in relation to new assessment of needs procedures for children with disabilities. [23548/18]

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.

Emergency Departments

69. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Minister for Health the reason behind the substantial increase in overcrowding in Naas Hospital emergency department over the first four months of 2018 relative to the same period in 2017. [23533/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In the context of a difficult winter for our health services, further compounded by Storm Emma, the first 4 months of the year saw a rise of 13.9% of patients on trolleys nationally, as compared to the same period in 2017. This reflects a rise in demand for unscheduled care across the hospital system, characterised by increased attendances and admissions, especially of those in the over 75 age group.

In relation to Naas Hospital, the first four months of the year saw a significant increase in trolley numbers, up 75.4%, on the same period last year. This was against a background of:

- a 1.7% increase in overall Emergency Department (ED) attendances;
- a 4.1% increase in ED attendances by persons over the age of 75;
- a 0.9% increase in ED admissions; and
- a 0.1% decrease in ED admissions of those in the over 75 age group.

I am advised by the HSE that delayed discharges in this hospital over an extended period, and bed capacity challenges, have impacted on the hospital's ability to respond during periods of peak ED demand, especially during the winter months. In February 2018, the overall medical length of stay recorded in Naas General Hospital was 7.7 days. Such long lengths of stay are related to the age and acuity of patients and contribute to slower bed turnover, which in turn, impacts on patient flow and ED congestion.

As Minister for Health, I am committed to continuing the effort to address overcrowding in our EDs, most notably, the capacity of the system to respond during periods of peak demand. In this context, I have asked my Department to work with the HSE to identify the location and mix of beds across the hospital system which can be opened and staffed this year and into 2019 in order to improve preparedness for Winter 2018/2019. Proposals received from the HSE in this regard are currently under consideration by the Department.

Occupational Therapy Waiting Lists

70. **Deputy Declan Breathnach** asked the Minister for Health the reason some 468 children and teenagers in County Louth had been waiting over a year for a first assessment for occupational therapy in March 2018. [23570/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply.

HSE Planning

71. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health the status of the plan prepared by the HSE regional management on the future of the Midland Regional Hospital, Portlaoise. [23556/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I am committed to securing and further de-

veloping the role of the Midland Regional Hospital Portlaoise as a constituent hospital within the Dublin Midlands Hospital Group. Since 2014, the focus has been on supporting the hospital to develop and enhance management capability, implementing changes required to address clinical service deficiencies, and incorporating the hospital into the governance structures within the Dublin Midlands Hospital Group.

Significant work has been undertaken to strengthen and stabilise current arrangements for services at the hospital to ensure that services that are not sustainable are discontinued and those that are, are safety assured and adequately resourced. Funding has increased by 35% relative to the 2012 budget and staffing levels have risen by 29% from the 2014 base. Governance and management arrangements in Portlaoise Hospital have been strengthened, additional clinical staff has been appointed and staff training, hospital culture and communications have improved.

As outlined at a meeting with Laois Oireachtas members, no decision has been made yet on the draft Action Plan for Portlaoise Hospital and I am currently giving consideration to a process for wider consultation.

Hospital Services

72. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health if the central sterilising supply department at the Mater Hospital will be retained within the public health system; if plans are in place to outsource the service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23449/18]

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.

Emergency Departments Services

73. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Health his views on whether the level of emergency department provision in the UL Hospital Group area is adequate for the population catchment of the group both in overall terms and in those of the demographic make-up. [23540/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As the Deputy will be aware, a new Emergency Department was opened at University Hospital Limerick (UHL) on the 29th of May 2017. The €24 million development aimed to provide UHL with increased capacity for emergency medicine to meet the demands of population growth, changing service models and to improve efficiency targets.

UHL was identified as a focus site under the Winter Initiative in terms of ED congestion. As such, UHL has put in place improvement plans setting out specific mitigating actions to improve patient flow and improve processes in the ED. In addition, 17 short-stay beds were opened in UHL under the Winter Initiative, and the Hospital Group was also supported over the recent winter months with additional home support packages and transitional care beds. UHL is now fully engaged with the National Patient Flow Improvement Project, as a pilot site, to further improve processes within the hospital.

Since its opening in 2017, the new ED at UL has seen 5.6% more activity. International evidence indicates that when facilities such as UL open, there is a corresponding increase in attendances. Reflecting this trend, UHL had the second highest number of ED attendances in the first four months of 2018, a rise of 11.3%, and a 7.9% rise in admissions, as compared to the

same period last year. In relation to persons over the age of 75, UHL also experienced a rise of 15.5% in attendances and a 16.7% rise in admissions between January and April 2018. The combination of these factors contributed to the 13.7% increase in trolley numbers in the first months of the year, notwithstanding performance improvement initiatives by UHL and increased investment in capacity over the winter months.

As Minister for Health, I am committed to continuing the effort to address overcrowding in our Emergency Departments, and in particular, the capacity of the system to respond during periods of peak demand. In this context, I have asked my Department to work with the HSE to identify the location and mix of beds across the hospital system, which can be opened and staffed this year and into 2019 in order to improve preparedness for Winter 2018/2019. A submission received from the HSE in this regard, which includes proposals in relation to UHL, is currently under consideration by my Department.

Hospital Appointments Delays

74. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Health the reason more than 12,000 persons had been waiting over a year for an outpatient appointment in County Limerick hospitals in April 2018. [23551/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I acknowledge that Outpatient waiting times are often unacceptably long and I am conscious of the burden that this places on patients and their families.

The HSE service plan 2018 sets out a target that 80% of patients waiting for a first outpatient appointment will be seen within a 52 week wait timeframe. HSE figures for March 2018 show that University of Limerick Hospitals Group are seeing 67% outpatients within 52 weeks.

Each year 3.3 million patients attend Hospital Outpatient clinics for appointments, with demand for services growing year-on-year. A key component of the management of waiting lists by hospitals is the categorisation of patients by clinical priority to ensure that all patients receive care in timely and clinically appropriate matter.

In 2017, University of Limerick Hospitals Group had over 216,000 (216,812) Outpatient department attendances. However, over 35,000 patients did not attend their appointments last year.

The HSE is working with the NTPF and my Department to finalise a joint plan focused on improving overall use of resources to tackle long patient waiting times and ensuring timely access to treatment and care for our patients. I hope to publish this Plan shortly. As part of this process the NTPF and the HSE are currently reviewing proposals from hospitals for outpatient initiatives.

Hospitals Funding

75. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Health if approval will be forthcoming for a request for additional funding of €1.8 million from Letterkenny University Hospital to enable it to open an additional 20 bed ward and staff it appropriately in order to address an issue with persons waiting on trolleys for hospital admission; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23257/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In the light of the conclusions of the Health

Service Capacity Review that the system will need nearly 2,600 additional acute hospital beds by 2031, I have asked my Department to work with the HSE to identify the location and mix of beds across the hospital system which can be opened and staffed this year and into 2019 in order to improve preparedness for Winter 2018/2019.

A submission in this regard from the HSE is currently under consideration by my Department, which includes proposals from Saolta Hospital Group in relation to opening additional capacity at Letterkenny University Hospital.

Hospital Groups

76. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the reason for the planned €2 million reduction in the Saolta Hospital Group's expenditure in 2018. [23518/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service issue, I have asked the HSE to reply to you directly.

Hospital Appointments Delays

77. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health the reason more than 15,309 persons had been waiting over a year for an outpatient appointment in Waterford University Hospital in April 2018. [23509/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I acknowledge that Outpatient waiting times are often unacceptably long and I am conscious of the burden that this places on patients and their families.

The HSE service plan 2018 sets out a target that 80% of patients waiting for a first outpatient appointment will be seen within a 52 week wait timeframe. HSE figures for March 2018 show that Waterford University Hospital is seeing over 58% of outpatients within 52 weeks.

Each year 3.3 million patients attend Hospital Outpatient clinics for appointments, with demand for services growing year-on-year. A key component of the management of waiting lists by hospitals is the categorisation of patients by clinical priority to ensure that all patients receive care in timely and clinically appropriate matter.

In 2017, Waterford University Hospital had over 147,000 (147,274) Outpatient Department attendances. However, over 20,000 patients did not attend their appointments last year.

Waterford University Hospital has advised that it is currently providing additional insourced clinics for those specialities with the longest waiting lists, including Urology, Rheumatology, Dermatology and ENT. It is expected that 300 additional patients will be seen in each of these services as a result of this initiative.

The HSE is working with the NTPF and my Department to finalise a joint plan focused on improving overall use of resources to tackle long patient waiting times and ensure timely access to treatment and care for our patients. I hope to publish this Plan shortly. As part of this process the NTPF and the HSE are currently reviewing proposals from hospitals for outpatient initiatives.

Hospital Waiting Lists

78. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 221 of 1 May 2018, the reason for the inpatient day case action plan failure to provide the NTPF scheme to patients that are transferred from waiting lists in one hospital to another hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23234/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Officials of my Department have discussed the matters raised in this Question with the Deputy. A response will issue directly to the Deputy.

Speech and Language Therapy Staff

79. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Health the number of speech and language therapists and occupational therapists that have been recruited by the HSE in 2018; the sectors of the health service to which they have been deployed; and the net increase in the whole time equivalent numbers of each that has resulted from this recruitment. [23563/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy on this matter.

Emergency Departments

80. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Health the reason for the substantial increase in overcrowding in Sligo University Hospital emergency department over the first four months of 2018 relative to the same period in 2017. [23536/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In the context of a difficult winter for our health services, further compounded by Storm Emma, the first 4 months of the year saw a rise of 13.9% of patients on trolleys nationally, as compared to the same period in 2017. This reflects a rise in demand for unscheduled care across the hospital system, characterised by increased attendances and admissions, in particular, of those in the over 75 age group.

In relation to Sligo University Hospital, the first four months of the year saw a significant increase in trolley numbers, up 77.7%, on the same period last year. This was against a background of:

- a 3.5% rise in overall ED attendances;
- a 4.5% rise in ED attendances by those in the over 75 age group;
- a 2.6% rise in overall ED admissions; and
- a 5.7% increase in ED attendances by people in the over 75 age group

The combination of these factors, including increased admissions by those over the age of 75 who tend to have more complex needs and longer lengths of stay, contributed to the significant increase in trolley numbers experienced by Sligo University Hospital between January and April this year.

As Minister for Health, I am committed to continuing the effort to address overcrowding in our Emergency Departments and, in particular, the capacity of the system to respond during periods of peak demand. In this context, I have asked my Department to work with the HSE to identify the location and mix of beds across the hospital system, which can be opened and staffed this year and into 2019 in order to improve preparedness for Winter 2018/19. Propos-

als received from the HSE in this regard are currently under consideration by my Department.

Occupational Therapy Waiting Lists

81. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health the reason some 926 children and teenagers in counties Laois and Offaly had been waiting over a year for a first assessment for occupational therapy in March 2018. [23569/18]

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.

Medical Aids and Appliances Provision

82. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Health the date on which the monitoring of the cost efficiencies in test strip usage begin; and if he will request the HTAG to bring forward the review of FreeStyle Libre to a maximum of six months from the date the monitoring began. [23228/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As the provision of these devices is a service matter, the HSE has been asked to respond directly to the Deputy on its monitoring of cost efficiencies.

One of the recommendations made by the Health Technology Assessment Expert Group was that data on costs incurred by patients using the device should be reviewed after a period of one year. I do not propose to request a change to this recommendation.

Hospital Appointments Delays

83. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Health the reason more than 12,000 adults and children had been waiting over a year for an outpatient appointment in Tallaght in April 2018. [23520/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I acknowledge that Outpatient waiting times are often unacceptably long and I am conscious of the burden that this places on patients and their families.

The HSE service plan 2018 sets out a target that 80% of patients waiting for a first outpatient appointment will be seen within a 52 week wait timeframe. HSE figures for March 2018 show that Tallaght University Hospital is seeing 64 % outpatients within 52 weeks.

Each year 3.3 million patients attend Hospital Outpatient clinics for appointments, with demand for services growing year-on-year. A key component of the management of waiting lists by hospitals is the categorisation of patients by clinical priority to ensure that all patients receive care in timely and clinically appropriate matter.

In 2017, Tallaght University Hospital had over 121,000 (121,521) Outpatient Department attendances. However, over 20,000 patients did not attend their appointments last year.

Tallaght University Hospital has advised that it has undertaken a number of actions to address the issue of long outpatient appointment waiting times. This includes the a 'see and treat' initiative for same-day minor procedures and the recruitment of additional consultants in ENT, orthopaedics and neurology. The hospital further advises it is working closely with the Acute Hospital Division of the HSE and with the NTPF to identify additional resources required to assist a reduction in waiting lists, including a joint initiative with local GPs on new patient pathways.

In addition, the HSE is working with the NTPF and my Department to finalise a joint plan focused on improving overall use of resources to tackle long patient waiting times and ensuring timely access to treatment and care for our patients. I hope to publish this Plan shortly.

Occupational Therapy Waiting Lists

84. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Health the reason some 440 children and teenagers in counties Cavan and Monaghan had been waiting over a year for a first assessment for occupational therapy in March 2018. [23567/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply.

Health Services

85. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Minister for Health if waiting lists for ophthalmology treatment in County Cork will be reduced; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23463/18]

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.

Orthodontic Services Waiting Lists

86. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health if the extended waiting times for minors for orthodontic treatment in the CHO4 area will be addressed; if he will consider extending the private procurement measures in place to reduce wait times; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23447/18]

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.

Emergency Departments

87. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Health the reason for the substantial increase in overcrowding in the emergency department in St. Luke's Hospital, Kilkenny over the first four months of 2018 relative to the same period in 2017. [23539/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Under the Winter Initiative, over 200 additional beds opened this winter across a range of sites, including 14 additional beds in St. Luke's

General Hospital Kilkenny. In addition, St. Luke's General Hospital Kilkenny was supported over the recent winter months with additional home support packages and transitional care beds in order to reduce delayed discharges, which can impact on patient flow and contribute to Emergency Department (ED) congestion.

In the context of a difficult winter for our health services, further compounded by Storm Emma, the first 4 months of the year saw a rise of 13.9% of patients on trolleys nationally, as compared to the same period in 2017. This increase reflects a rise in demand for unscheduled care across the hospital system, characterised by increased attendances and admissions, in particular, of those in the over 75 age group.

In relation St Luke's Hospital Kilkenny, the first 4 months of the year saw a decrease in trolley number of 16.9%, 301 less trolleys, than the same period last year. This was against a background of:-

- a 2.1% increase in overall ED attendances;
- a 2.7% increase in ED attendances of people over 75 years of age;
- an increase of 11.8% in ED admissions; and
- an increase of 12.2% in ED admissions of those over 75.

Within an overall situation that remains very challenging, I welcome the reduction in trolley numbers achieved by St Luke's General Hospital Kilkenny and that we are beginning to see the impact of winter initiatives to relieve ED congestion.

As Minister for Health, I am committed to continuing the effort to address overcrowding in our Emergency Departments and, in particular, the capacity of the system to respond during periods of peak demand. In this context, I have asked my Department to work with the HSE to identify the location and mix of beds across the hospital system which can be opened and staffed this year and into 2019 in order to improve preparedness for Winter 2018/2019. Proposals received from the HSE in this regard are currently under consideration by my Department.

Hospital Facilities

88. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Health the status of the two orthopaedic theatres which closed in Merlin Part University Hospital, Galway in September, 2017; if the theatres have been reopened; if so, the date on which they opened; if not, the date scheduled for their opening; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23456/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service issue, I have asked the HSE to reply to you directly.

Suicide Prevention

89. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Health the actions he plans to take in response to the increase in suicide rates in 2017 among young mothers in Ballyfermot, Clondalkin and Tallaght, which for the first time equalled the rates of suicide among men; the engagement he has had on the issue with his counterparts working in the areas of social protection, mental health and education in order to find practical solutions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23491/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): Suicide is a tragedy which has devastating effects for individuals, families and wider society. Addressing suicide and its causes is a priority for myself and for the Government.

The HSE has advised me that the 3-year moving average rate of suicide in South Dublin is recorded as 6.8 per 100,000 population for the period 2013-2015 and 5.0 per 100,000 for the period 2014-2016. The Deputy will be aware that final figures 2017 are not yet available however, recent reports indicate a possible increase in the number of suicides in Dublin South-Central in 2017. Further indications are that women may account for up to 50% of such suicides.

A number of responses have been developed and implemented in relation to individual suicides in terms of supports to families in the aftermath of suicide and also at community level. These responses include:

- Individual support through the Primary Care Psychology service to children bereaved by suicide;
- Support to community members given by Primary Care Psychology services;
- Linking in appropriate services to support individual families and the community in the aftermath of suicide;
- Working with agencies who have contacted the HSE with concerns around family members bereaved by suicide and ensuring a timely access into appropriate services including Mental Health Services;
- Working with agencies concerned with substance misuse to identify trends in relation to poly-drug use and suicide; and
- Supporting local community initiatives to respond to suicide at a local level through training and developing a local resource for residents in relation to agencies available to support them around the issue of suicide.

Our response involves suicide prevention and the building of resilience for individuals and communities. Significant engagement has taken place with stakeholders across a variety of areas to ensure that this issue is being addressed in the most appropriate manner. One example of our engagement can be seen in the February 2018 launch of 'Connecting for Life Dublin South; Suicide Prevention Action Plan 2018-2020'.

In 2017 an extensive consultation took place to develop this plan. This consultation process helped to identify key risks in relation to suicide in the Dublin South area and associated service challenges. In response to these identified risks and in line with the national Connecting for Life framework, the action plan was developed.

Implementation of the plan is being driven by one of three Resource Officers for Suicide Prevention across Dublin South, Kildare and West Wicklow. 'Connecting for Life Dublin South' details 64 actions that are currently being implemented in the area with the aim of reducing the rate of suicide in South Dublin in line with national targets.

Throughout Dublin South there are a number of services targeted at the promotion of positive mental health and at addressing the needs of those experiencing mental health difficulties. These services include adult, adolescent and child specialist mental health services, suicide prevention supports and services and primary care and network services including counselling in Primary Care.

In addition, the HSE funds a number of Dublin South partner agencies with the aim of providing support and building resilience. These include Candle Community Trust; AWARE; Belong To; Mental Health Ireland; Pieta House; Samaritans Ireland; and Suicide or Survive Ltd amongst others.

The Resource Officer for Suicide Prevention in the area is also involved with mental health promotion and training at local level. In 2017, over 1,000 individuals, working or living in the Dublin South area, were trained through programmes to enhance the community's capacity to respond to suicide and self-harm.

Hospital Groups

90. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health if he will be reviewing governance structures in public hospitals; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23502/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Currently, there are seven hospital groups which have responsibility for planning and managing acute hospital services within a specified area. The Groups are presently established on a non-statutory administrative basis. Each Group has an Administrative Board that has a mandate to assist and advise in respect of acute hospital services in the Hospital Group. Management teams are in place for all Hospital Groups. The sole line of executive accountability for the Group CEO is to the National Director for Acute Hospital Services, and they are accountable for their Hospital Groups' planning and performance under the HSE Accountability Framework. It is also important to note that the majority of Hospital Groups contain a number of voluntary hospitals, which have their origins in varying forms of legal establishment with differing legal corporate governance structures. The relationship between the Group CEO and the voluntary hospitals under their remit is governed exclusively through the Service Level Arrangement entered into between the HSE and each voluntary hospital.

As the Deputy will be aware, the Sláintecare report made a series of important recommendations in relation to health service structures, governance and accountability. This includes the establishment of a governing board for the HSE, the creation of regional bodies to support the delivery of integrated care and enhanced clinical governance and patient safety and quality measures.

I have already signalled my support for the Committee's recommendations in this area and work is already underway that will bring improvements in governance and accountability. Legislation is being drafted to establish a board for the HSE and I hope that this will be enacted this year. An extensive programme of work is underway to embed clinical governance and patient safety in healthcare delivery. This includes the Patient Safety Licensing Bill which is due to go to pre-legislative scrutiny shortly. A public consultation on the geographical alignment of hospital groups and community healthcare organisations has been undertaken as a first step to inform considerations in relation to future health service structures.

Ultimately, the task of identifying the optimal set of health structures and the most appropriate governance, accountability and performance framework for the future health system will be an important stream of work under the Sláintecare programme of reforms. To this end, work on a Sláintecare Implementation plan is advancing in my Department. I expect bring to these proposals to Government in the coming weeks.

Medical Negligence Cases

91. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health the progress of proposals to improve the legal approach to managing clinical negligence cases. [23434/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Since the publication of the recommendations of the Working Group on Medical Negligence and Periodic Payments, which was chaired by former High Court Judge John Quirke, significant legal reforms have been introduced or are on the way in order to deal more effectively with clinical negligence claims.

These include the enacting of The Mediation Act, 2017 and The Civil Liability Amendment Act 2017. Work is also underway within the Department of Justice and Equality on framing regulations for Pre-Action Protocols under the Legal Services Regulation Act 2015, which are aimed at encouraging timely communications between parties and the early resolution of such actions. Other important measures include the establishment of the National Patient Safety Office in my Department and the launch of the HSE's Incident Management Framework in January 2018.

Nevertheless, I believe we must go further in addressing the difficulties which our current system presents for those who have experienced harm. I have informed Government that, building on recent legal reforms, I will engage with Minister Flanagan on the options to further improve the legal approach to managing clinical negligence cases. For this purpose my officials met Department of Justice and Equality officials recently to examine the key issues involved and to examine all options available.

This action will be progressed in the coming weeks in order to bring further proposals to Government. I expect that all potential options to improve the current system will be considered in the process.

HSE Expenditure

92. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health if he will report on the HSE's budget; if spending is within profile; if hospitals are in budget; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23500/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): At the end of March, the HSE is €116m over profile. While made up of offsetting surpluses and deficits, the main drivers of the overall deficit are Acute Hospitals, Disabilities, Support Services, State Claims Agency, and underachievement on the Value Improvement Programme.

Expenditure in the Acute Hospitals Division is approximately €63m over budget at the end of the first quarter. Two thirds of the variance is a result of expenditure over budget, with one third associated with shortfalls in income. The HSE estimates that approximately a quarter of the variance at the end of the first quarter relates to the influenza surge and the impact of Storm Emma.

In addition to the challenges set out in the National Service Plan, pressures around pay rates, hospital income and regulatory compliance continue to be experienced during 2018. Performance engagement with the Health Service Executive management team has emphasised the importance of financial management and delivery of the National Service Plan savings. Specific emphasis has been placed on acute hospitals performance and pay management with dedicated meetings between the Department and the Health Service Executive to focus on these areas.

The Department and the HSE will, under the general umbrella of the Performance and Ac-

accountability Framework continue to seek to mitigate challenges as they arise.

Health Services Reform

93. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health if, in the context of reorganisation of the health services, consideration will be given to the establishment of regional bodies consisting of public representatives, the professional stakeholders and patient representatives with a view to restoring a demographic structure throughout the country at which the specific issues relative to these particular regions can be discussed in detail, senior representatives of which might then be considered for a national body accountable to him; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23465/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Sláintecare report makes a number of recommendations in relation to improving health service structures, governance and accountability, including the establishment of a governing board for the HSE and the establishment of regional bodies to support the delivery of integrated care.

A range of actions are already underway in response to the Sláintecare report. Work is at an advanced stage in my Department in developing a Sláintecare Implementation Plan. The plan will translate the Sláintecare Report into a detailed programme of reform over the next 10 years, with a focus on the immediate years ahead. I have already signalled my support for the Committee's recommendations in relation to structures, governance and accountability and these will form an integral component of the Implementation Plan. I expect to bring this Plan to Government shortly.

As part of delivering early on this element of the reform programme, the Government has agreed to the establishment of an independent board for the HSE. The required legislation is being drafted and it is hoped that it can pass through the Houses of the Oireachtas and be enacted quickly.

The task of identifying the optimal set of health structures and the most appropriate governance, accountability and performance framework for the future health system will also be an important stream of work under the Sláintecare programme of reforms. As an initial first step, my Department has undertaken a public consultation regarding the geographical alignment of Hospital Groups and Community Healthcare Organisations. The outputs from this consultation process will inform the development of detailed proposals in this area, including the role and function of regional bodies.

Services for People with Disabilities

94. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health if the HSE is now operating assessment of needs for children with disabilities on a new standard operating procedure; and the organisations which were consulted regarding the new procedures. [23435/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose, and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

Hospital Appointments Delays

95. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Minister for Health the action which will be taken to expedite outpatient appointments for the 3,944 children that have been waiting for a consultation in Temple Street Hospital for more than 18 months. [23572/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Improving waiting times for hospital procedures and outpatient appointments is a key commitment in the programme for Government. It is acknowledged that outpatient waiting lists are a challenge which need to be addressed.

The development of a sustainable and safe paediatric orthopaedic service, including scoliosis services for children and young people has been prioritised in the 2018. An additional €9 million has been provided to the HSE in 2018 specifically to develop paediatric orthopaedic services, including further increasing access to scoliosis services.

The HSE and Children's Hospital Group developed a Paediatric Scoliosis Waiting List Action Plan for 2018 and this includes actions to address the longest outpatient waiters.

The HSE National Service Plan 2018 sets out a target that 80% of patients waiting for a first outpatient appointment will be seen within a 52 week wait timeframe. HSE figures for March 2018 show that Children's University Hospital, Temple Street are seeing 61-63% outpatients within 52 weeks.

The HSE advise that in 2017, Children's University Hospital, Temple Street, had 60,534 outpatient attendances. It is worth noting that in the same year, 8,678 (14%) of patients did not attend their hospital appointment.

The most recent NTPF figures for April 2018 show that there was a total of 17,030 patients on the outpatient waiting list for Children's University Hospital, Temple Street. 77% of these patients are waiting 18 months or less.

A key component of the management of waiting lists by hospitals is the categorisation of patients by clinical priority to ensure that all patients receive care in timely and clinically appropriate matter.

The HSE is working with the NTPF and my Department to finalise a joint plan focused on improving overall use of resources to tackle long patient waiting times and ensuring timely access to treatment and care for our patients. I hope to publish this Plan shortly. As part of this process, the NTPF and the HSE are currently reviewing proposals from hospitals for outpatient initiatives.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services

96. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health the timeframe for bringing the child and adolescent mental health services in CHO7 to the level envisaged in A Vision for Change. [23558/18]

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 Consultant Recruitment

97. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Health the reason there has been little progress to date on the appointment of consultants to Letterkenny University Hospital, including a consultant paediatric post vacated in County Sligo over a year ago still not approved by CAC with the incorrect calibre level of consultant being advertised; if the crisis in diabetes care in County Donegal will be addressed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23488/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service issue, I have asked the HSE to reply to you directly.

Hospital Appointments Delays

98. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Health the reason for the four fold increase since April 2016 in the number of outpatients waiting more than a year for a consultation in Our Lady's Hospital, Navan. [23564/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I acknowledge that Outpatient waiting times are often unacceptably long and I am conscious of the burden that this places on patients and their families.

The HSE service plan 2018 sets out a target that 80% of patients waiting for a first outpatient appointment will be seen within a 52 week wait timeframe. HSE figures for March 2018 show that Our Lady's Hospital, Navan is seeing over between 79-83% of outpatients within 52 weeks.

Each year 3.3 million patients attend Hospital Outpatient clinics for appointments, with demand for services growing year-on-year. A key component of the management of waiting lists by hospitals is the categorisation of patients by clinical priority to ensure that all patients receive care in timely and clinically appropriate matter.

In 2017, Our Lady's Hospital, Navan had over 29,000 (29,836) Outpatient Department attendances.

Our Lady's Hospital Navan has advised that a number of steps are underway to reduce current OPD waiting lists. These include the appointment of a scheduled care lead to oversee scheduling of patients and an Out-patient Manager who will support validation of OPD lists and other measures to improve OPD waiting times. In addition, Our Lady's Hospital is seeking to fill a number of vacant posts, including positions in orthopaedics, rheumatology and gynaecology.

The HSE is working with the NTPF and my Department to finalise a joint plan focused on improving overall use of resources to tackle long patient waiting times and ensure timely access to treatment and care for our patients. I hope to publish this Plan shortly. As part of this process the NTPF and the HSE are currently reviewing proposals from hospitals for outpatient initiatives.

Organ Transplant Services

99. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health his plans to update the living kidney donor reimbursement scheme to provide for the reimbursement of stay-at-home parents that donate a kidney; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23452/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Minister of Health approved a policy for the reimbursement of the expenses of living donors in November 2014. The scheme provides for the reimbursement of accommodation and travel expenses incurred by living kidney donors up to a maximum of €6,000. In addition, the scheme reimburses loss of earnings incurred by salaried/waged donors and self-employed donors for up to 12 weeks after the donation, up to a maximum of €10,000. This maximum figure for loss of earnings was increased from €6,000 in 2016.

A review of the policy is being initiated in my Department and it is hoped that this will be completed around the end of June. Some reimbursement of the child care expenses incurred by stay at home parents will be considered as part of the review.

Hospital Waiting Lists Action Plans

100. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health when a plan to tackle outpatient waiting lists will be published; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23503/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Improving waiting times for hospital procedures and outpatient appointments is a key commitment in the Programme for Government. The Outpatient waiting list remains a significant challenge to be addressed in 2018.

The HSE service plan 2018 sets out a target that 80% of patients waiting for a first outpatient appointment will be seen within a 52 week wait timeframe. HSE figures for March 2018 show that nationally hospitals are seeing over 71% of outpatients within 52 weeks, with 19 of the 45 hospitals reaching the target of 80%.

Each year, 3.3 million patients attend Hospital Outpatient clinics for appointments. A number of steps, including a national waiting list validation project by the HSE, are being taken to ensure the lists are accurate and these efforts will intensify in the coming months.

The HSE is working with the NTPF and my Department to finalise a joint plan focused on improving overall use of resources to tackle long patient waiting times and ensuring timely access to treatment and care for our patients. I hope to publish this Plan shortly. As part of this process the NTPF and the HSE are currently reviewing proposals from hospitals for outpatient initiatives.

Health Services

101. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Health if services provided by a service (details supplied) will be guaranteed to have a location in Dublin 1. [18609/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne): As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

Hospital Services

102. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Health when there will be a permanent cath lab at Sligo University Hospital. [23516/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Specialist cardiac catheterisation lab services are provided in a small number of hospitals in order to ensure that the services provided achieve the required standards of safety, quality and sustainability in the interests of patients.

The Deputy may wish to note that I have established a Steering Group, chaired by Professor Philip Nolan, President of Maynooth University to undertake a National Review of Specialist Cardiac Services. The National Review aims to achieve optimal patient outcomes at population level with particular emphasis on the safety, quality and sustainability of the service. In that regard, consideration will be given to the optimal configuration of a national adult cardiac service. In terms of scope, the National Review will cover scheduled and unscheduled hospital-based services for the diagnosis and treatment of cardiac disease in adults. The question of the provision of a permanent cath lab at Sligo University Hospital will be informed by the National Review.

The Steering Group began its work on 31st January 2018 and the Chair anticipates that it will take approximately 18 months to produce a comprehensive and robust final report. However, the Deputy can be assured that all efforts will be made to conclude the Review at an earlier date, if feasible.

Hospital Facilities

103. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 156 of 28 February 2018, the reason the HSE has not issued a reply to date; when the renal dialysis unit will open in Letterkenny University Hospital; the reason for the delays to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23489/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service issue, I have asked the HSE to reply to you directly.

Drug and Alcohol Task Forces

104. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Health his plans for drug task forces to provide community responses to problem alcohol consumption and promote community awareness of alcohol related harm; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23460/18]

109. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Health his plans to increase the funding to local and regional drug task forces in view of the extreme difficulties they are experiencing in maintaining programmes and projects with funding allocations remaining at 2014 levels; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23461/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne): I propose to take Questions Nos. 104 and 109 together.

Drug and Alcohol Task Forces play a key role in assessing the extent and nature of the drug problem and in initiating appropriate responses, so that there is a coordinated approach involving all sectors to the problem of substance misuse in local communities.

I secured additional funding of €250,000 in Budget 2018 to improve the organisational effectiveness of the task forces in implementing the national drugs strategy, Reducing Harm,

Supporting Recovery. It is intended that task forces can apply for up to €10,000 in additional funding, on a once-off basis, in 2018 under this scheme. Task forces must submit applications for this additional funding by 11 June 2018.

The Department is developing a new programme to promote community awareness of alcohol-related harm. An additional €0.25m is available in Budget 2018 to fund phase 1 of the scheme, with the expectation that this will increase to €1m in 2019. It is anticipated that the scheme will commence in the last quarter of 2018.

I strongly believe that resources should be directed towards interventions that are most effective in reducing problem substance use. Measuring the effectiveness of responses to the drug problem is therefore an important objective of public policy. Towards this end, my Department will develop a performance measurement system by 2020 which will improve accountability across all sectors, including the task forces.

Nursing Homes Support Scheme Eligibility

105. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Health when he will bring forward proposals to reform the nursing home support scheme in relation to farming families. [23554/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): 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.

General Practitioner Services Provision

106. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Health the status of plans to deliver a general practitioner out of hours service for north County Wicklow; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23493/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I am committed to the development of an improved GP out of hours service for North Wicklow which can provide the appropriate level of cover for the population of the area. The development of such a service will allow GPs to participate fully in the provision of an integrated healthcare system providing medical services that are appropriate, timely and effective, easily accessible and responsive to the needs of patients. There is funding provision for the introduction of a structured GP out of hours service for the South Dublin / North Wicklow areas in the HSE 2018 National Service Plan. This service is intended to cover the night time hours from Monday to Friday and 24 hour cover at weekends and public holidays, providing urgent general practitioner services to patients outside of normal surgery hours. The service will include initial triage and GP consultation at treatment centres or home visits as appropriate, in accordance with HIQA standards for Safer Better Healthcare. The procurement process to identify a service provider has commenced and the tender was published on the eTenders website earlier this month. Subject to successful selection of a suitable service provider, the service is scheduled to be operational later this year.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services

107. **Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Health the way in which he is addressing the lengthy waiting time for student appointments with CAMHS; and his role in ensuring children have prompt access to services. [22383/18]

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.

Health Services Staff Remuneration

108. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Health his plans to provide for pay restoration for persons working for publicly funded organisations that took pay cuts during the economic crisis; his views on whether staff should have their salaries restored on a parallel basis to civil servants; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21711/18]

313. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Health the status of the negotiations regarding section 39 pay restoration for employees that were employed before 2008 in view of the 2017 Labour Court recommendations; the actions taken by the HSE, his Department and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform to date regarding this set of employees; when a solution can be expected; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23098/18]

410. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health if the results of the audit on pay restoration for section 39 organisations have been published; if not, when he plans to publish it; the engagement he has had with section 39 agencies in relation to this issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23359/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 108, 313 and 410 together.

On 9 February 2018, an agreement was reached at the WRC between the Department of Health, the HSE and health sector Trade Unions in relation to a process aimed at resolving the pay restoration issue for staff employed by section 39 bodies. While it is understood that pay savings were made by the organisations, the precise mix of pay cuts or other savings measures will have varied. Also, where there were pay cuts, it is not at all clear that they were applied in a universally consistent manner, as is the case in the public sector.

Therefore, the Government has put in place a process to establish a deeper understanding of the funding position in these grant - aided organisations and the true extent of the pay reductions applied. The Minister for Health asked the HSE to engage with the Section 39 organisations to establish the facts around what cuts were applied and how and when they were implemented.

On foot of agreement at the WRC, the interim data gathering exercise is being progressed. The HSE has shared a draft of the interim report, which covers a sample of 50 agencies identified in the WRC agreement, with the staff side. Upon receipt of feedback it will be finalised and issued formally to the DoH. Initial indications are that of the 50 pilot sites, most did apply pay reductions and only some have commenced pay restoration.

Question No. 109 answered with Question No. 104.

Services for People with Disabilities

110. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Health the plans being put in place to address the impact that demographic changes and an ageing society will have on persons with disabilities. [23506/18]

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.

The self-reported rate of disability has risen in Ireland over the last number of years with an additional 47,796 or 13.5% of the population now reporting at least one disability (Census 2016). This is an increase of 8% since 2011.

Of those aged 65 years and over, the number has risen by 20,319 to 9.5% since 2011. Generally, people are living longer including adults with intellectual disability who have acquired age-related illnesses and conditions. In addition, more people with a disability have more complex needs. Around 15% of over-60s with intellectual disabilities live with family members, usually with sibling or parents.

The change in demographics and family structure, increased life expectancy and changing needs for those with both a physical and sensory disability and/or an intellectual disability, has led to a significant increase in the need for disability services across all settings. This includes day supports, residential and respite services, personal assistant and home support services.

Disability services focus on enabling people with disabilities to achieve their full potential, living ordinary lives in ordinary places, as independently as possible while ensuring that the voices of service users and their families are heard, and that they are fully involved in planning and improving services to meet their needs.

The HSE recognises that in 2018 it faces a significant financial challenge in meeting essential demand, particularly in relation to residential placements for people with an intellectual disability. In this regard, they have committed to developing a strategic five year framework to support multi-annual planning for residential care services and community supports to include day, respite, personal assistant, home support services as well as therapeutic interventions taking account of national database projections and the need to develop sustainable models of service which achieve HIQA compliance within approved timeframes.

To meet the challenges arising from the increase in the number of people living with disability, the increase in age and life expectancy both of the person with the disability and their carer and the changing needs of people with a disability, collaborative working is required across the wider health and social care setting with the aim of improving access to services for all people with disability. It is important to recognise that the needs of people with a disability extend well beyond health service provision, and the health service will participate fully with other governmental departments and services in the development of cross-sectoral strategies to maximise access to services and supports for people with disabilities.

My Department also provides funding through the Health Research Board, for the intellectual Disability Supplement to The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing.

IDS-TILDA is a longitudinal study researching ageing in Ireland among people with an intellectual disability aged 40 and over. This study is the first of its kind in Europe, and the only

study able to directly compare the ageing of people with intellectual disability with the general ageing population.

The underpinning values of IDS-TILDA are inclusion, choice, empowerment, person centred, the promotion of people with intellectual disability, the promotion of best practice and to make a contribution to the lives of people with intellectual disability.

The recently published Wave 3 IDS-TILDA report marked the 10-year anniversary of IDS-TILDA and captured how much has changed in Ireland, over those 10 years in the lives of people ageing with an intellectual disability. Thanks to IDS-TILDA, more is known today about the lives of people with an intellectual disability as they age.

Further details are available from IDS-TILDA at <https://idstilda.tcd.ie/>.

Maternity Services

111. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Health the status of the implementation of the recommendations of the external independent clinical review of maternity services at Portiuncula Hospital. [23507/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I would like to convey my sympathies to the families involved and welcome the completion of this review process for them.

The HSE has advised me that Portiuncula University Hospital and Saolta University Health Care Group have reviewed the findings and recommendations in the report. An Implementation Team is already in place to progress the recommendations. I particularly welcome the fact that the team includes input from some of the families affected.

I am also assured that a significant number of actions are already underway which will advance the implementation of the recommendations.

I trust that this clarifies the position.

Psychological Assessments Waiting Times

112. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health if the HSE's waiting times for assessment of need for children with disabilities will be addressed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23446/18]

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.

Hospitals Building Programme

113. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Minister for Health when the proposed extension for Macroom Hospital will advance to construction; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23462/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): As the Health Service Executive is responsible for the delivery of health care infrastructure projects, the Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in relation to the proposed extension at Macroom Hospital.

Hospital Waiting Lists Action Plans

114. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Health if he will be announcing new measures to address the long waiting times for paediatric outpatient appointments. [23508/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Improving waiting times for hospital procedures and outpatient appointments is a key commitment in the programme for Government. It is acknowledged that outpatient waiting lists are a challenge which need to be addressed.

The development of a sustainable and safe paediatric orthopaedic service, including scoliosis services for children and young people has been prioritised in the 2018. An additional €9 million has been provided to the HSE in 2018 specifically to develop paediatric orthopaedic services, including increasing access to scoliosis services. The HSE and Children's Hospital Group developed a Paediatric Scoliosis Waiting List Action Plan for 2018 and this includes actions targeted at patients waiting longest for an outpatient appointment.

The NSP sets out a target that 80% of patients waiting for a first outpatient appointment will be seen within a 52 week wait timeframe. HSE figures for March 2018 show that the three hospitals of the CHG are seeing 62-64% of outpatients within 52 weeks.

In 2017, almost 150,000 (148,948) patients attended outpatients across the three hospitals of the CHG. It is worth noting that in the same year, across the three hospitals, over 21,000 (14%) of patients did not attend their hospital appointments.

The most recent NTPF figures for April 2018 show that there was a total of 43,316 patients on the outpatient waiting list across the three hospitals of the CHG. 77% of these patients are waiting 18 months or less.

The CHG advise that capacity challenges are managed daily, with each of the three children's hospitals supporting each other in terms of bed utilisation and availability.

A key component of the management of waiting lists by hospitals is the categorisation of patients by clinical priority to ensure that all patients receive care in a timely and clinically appropriate manner.

The HSE is working with the NTPF and my Department to finalise a joint plan focused on improving overall use of resources to tackle long patient waiting times and ensure timely access to treatment and care for our patients. I hope to publish this Plan shortly. As part of this process the NTPF and the HSE are currently reviewing proposals from hospitals, including the hospitals across the CHG, for outpatient initiatives.

Question No. 115 answered with Question No. 60.

116. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health the strategies the HSE south west group has in place to deal with the chronic staffing shortages across key disciplines, that is, consultants, doctors, nurses and healthcare professionals at University Hospital Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23448/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Government is firmly committed to supporting the recruitment and retention of the right mix of workers across the health service. Notwithstanding recruitment and retention challenges, the number of consultants has increased by 110 in the 12 months to end March 2018 and by 462 in the past five years. Similarly, funding was provided in 2017 for the Nursing Recruitment and Retention Agreement workforce plan which committed the HSE to recruiting 1,224 additional nurses and midwives. There has been a significant growth in the appointment of nurses and midwives with 942 WTE of the 1,224 posts filled (including student nurses) or 69% (847 WTE) excluding student nurses. The HSE remain committed to the Agreement and efforts will continue to fill the remaining posts.

The National Strategic Framework for Health and Social Care Workforce Planning aims to support the recruitment and retention of the right mix of workers across the health and social care system to meet planned and projected service need. Early actions to implement the Framework are currently taking place.

In relation to the specific query raised regarding staffing levels at UHK, the HSE has advised that the South/South West Hospital Group (S/SWHG) is working with University Hospital Kerry (UHK) to address staffing shortages at the hospital via local, national and international campaigns.

For example, the S/SWHG and UHK are working with the Consultant Appointments Advisory Committee (CAAC) and the Public Appointments Service (PAS) for the approval, advertisement and recruitment of all new and replacement consultant posts. The S/SWHG has approval to fill Training Lead positions across the S/SWHG at consultant level and this will support efforts to recruit in specialities which to date have failed to attract candidates.

An International Recruitment Agency appointed under the HSE National Framework has been used for nursing and midwifery recruitment in UHK. Furthermore, UHK is an approved site for training of nursing students and the HSE has confirmed that the hospital will be offering all its graduates permanent contracts following successful completion of the nursing degree programme.

For all other staff groups, the S/SWHG continues to run campaigns through the recruitment body of the HSE's Health Business Services group. It regularly updates information supporting these campaigns to reflect additional opportunities unique to working in UHK, including opportunities for training and further career development.

The S/SWHG acknowledges the recruitment challenges in UHK but wishes to assure the Deputy that it will continue to actively recruit suitably qualified staff to ensure that staffing levels are safe and to ensure patient centred care.

Question No. 117 answered with Question No. 64.

Services for People with Disabilities

118. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Health if he will report on planned changes to introduce a screening process in the assessment of needs for children; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23525/18]

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.

Advertising Regulation

119. **Deputy Denise Mitchell** asked the Minister for Health the steps he is taking to address the targeted advertising of junk food to children and young persons online. [18727/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne): In February, I launched new voluntary Codes of Practice for the advertising and marketing of food and non-alcoholic drinks in the non-broadcast media - including digital media - in accordance with a recommendation in the national Obesity Policy and Action Plan (OPAP). The OPAP was launched in September 2016 under the auspices of the Healthy Ireland agenda.

The purpose of the Codes, which have been agreed with the food industry, is to ensure that foods high in fat, salt and sugar are marketed in a responsible way. In particular the Codes seek to ensure that children are not exposed to inappropriate marketing, advertising or sponsorship associated with these kinds of food and drink products, and that healthier food choices are actively promoted.

In effect, the purpose of the Codes is to reduce the exposure of children to unhealthy foods.

Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland

120. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the way in which he plans to address the ongoing and continuing difficulty in growing the nursing and midwifery workforce; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23501/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Government and the HSE remain committed to recruiting and retaining nurses and midwives in the public health service. As part of the Nursing Recruitment and Retention Agreement with the INMO and SIPTU, the HSE agreed to appoint 1,224 additional nurses and midwives in 2017.

The HSE has submitted the final report setting out progress on implementation of the Agreement as at end December 2017. The report shows that there has been significant growth in the appointment of nurses and midwives in the final months of the year with 942 WTE of the 1,224 posts filled (including student nurses) or 69% (847 WTE) excluding the student nurses. The HSE remain committed to the Agreement and efforts will continue to fill the remaining posts.

The measures put in place by the HSE to recruit nurses and midwives included two international recruitment campaigns in 2017, the "Bring Them Home" campaign and the "New Year New Career" campaign. Nurses who relocate to work in the Irish public health service can receive up to €3,000 in relocation expenses. The HSE is also in the process of offering all 2018 graduate nurses and midwives permanent posts within a Hospital Group or CHO subject

to them attaining registration and satisfactory performance.

Retention measures undertaken by the HSE include a pre-retirement initiative, career breaks and education and training opportunities. In 2017, an additional 130 nursing undergraduate places were made available in the nursing degree programme to increase the supply of nurses. Also 120 Advanced Nurse Practitioner education places were made available.

The Public Service Pay Commission has already recognised that nurses and midwives are one of the grades which have recruitment and retention difficulties. Their second phase of work is underway, with nurses and midwifery grades being one of the first groups to be looked at. I expect their report in June and look forward to hearing what recommendations they will make.

Respite Care Services Data

121. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the number of respite care hours provided for the first quarter of 2018 in each CHO area; the way in which this compares with applications for respite care; the respite care provided in each of the years 2011 to 2017 and to date 2018, by CHO area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23450/18]

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.

The Programme for Partnership Government states that the Government wishes to provide more accessible respite care to facilitate full support for people with a disability.

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.

General Practitioner Contracts

122. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Health the status of the general practitioner contractual review process particularly in relation to the provision of routine phlebotomy services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23490/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I acknowledge the important role that general practitioners play in our health service and I recognise the commitment of GPs to ensuring a responsive, accessible and high-quality service to patients. The Government is committed to engaging with the representatives of GPs on the development of a package of measures and reforms to modernise the current GMS contract and which will enable additional resources to be put into general practice if agreement can be reached.

Earlier this month officials from my Department and the HSE met with the Irish Medical Organisation in order to progress this agenda. In line with the long-established approach to such processes, and by agreement of the parties concerned, I am not in position to give further details while discussions between the parties are under way.

Under the terms of the current GMS contract, GPs are required to provide eligible patients

with “all proper and necessary treatment of a kind usually undertaken by a general practitioner and not requiring special skill or experience of a degree or kind which general practitioners cannot reasonably be expected to possess.” There is no provision under the GMS GP contract for persons who hold a medical card or GP visit card to be charged for routine phlebotomy services provided by their GP which are required to either assist in the diagnosis of illness or the treatment of a condition. The HSE has advised GPs that where a blood test forms part of the investigation or necessary treatment of a patient’s symptoms or conditions, this should be free of charge for patients who hold a medical card or GP visit card. Notwithstanding this, I am aware that some GPs are charging GMS patients for phlebotomy services in some circumstances.

This is a matter of concern for me as it has long been the position, under successive Governments, that no user charges should apply to GP services provided to GMS and GP visit card patients. If a patient who holds a medical card or GP visit card believes he or she has been incorrectly charged for routine phlebotomy services by his or her GP, then that patient may take the matter up with their HSE Local Health Office, who will investigate the complaint.

If the local office determines that the charge was inappropriate, it will inform the HSE Primary Care Reimbursement Service who will arrange to refund the cost of the blood test to patient and recoup this amount from the GP. The local office will inform the GP of the decision to deduct the payment.

Question No. 123 answered with Question No. 60.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services

124. **Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher** asked the Minister for Health the timeframe for bringing the child and adolescent mental health services in CHO1 to the level envisaged in A Vision for Change. [23560/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Maternity Services Provision

125. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Health the HSE’s policy in relation to the provision of out of hours emergency scan services for pregnant women; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23455/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service issue, I have asked the HSE to reply to you directly.

Mental Health Services Provision

126. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Health when the new 50 bed mental health unit will open at GUH; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23459/18]

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.

National Dementia Strategy Implementation

127. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health the status of the implementation of the National Dementia Strategy. [23510/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): The National Dementia Strategy was launched in December 2014, and seeks to increase awareness and understanding of dementia, ensure earlier diagnosis and intervention and develop enhanced community based supports and services. It was created to meet the challenges faced by the 55,000 people living with dementia in Ireland and to provide a network of services that will meet growing demand in future years. The number of people with dementia is expected to almost treble by 2046.

The Strategy identified 35 priority and additional actions to be implemented over its lifetime. Of these 35 actions, one has been fully implemented. Substantial work has been completed on 16 others, while preliminary work has been conducted on a further 17. One action has suffered from significant delays because there is a number of pending legislative streams which are impacting on the progression of this action.

Work is underway on the vast majority of actions. Due to the lack of reliable national data on dementia care services in Ireland, much of this work has focused on collecting baseline information on current dementia service structures, to generate an evidence base for the development of services. This work is necessary in order to ensure that the development of national dementia services meets the identified needs of people with dementia, their families and carers, while also integrating with existing structures and services.

Priority actions, which received funding from the HSE and grants from the Atlantic Philanthropies, have included the establishment of a National Dementia Office within the HSE, which is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the Strategy.

The PREPARED programme offers GPs and Primary Care Teams upskilling and training to diagnose and manage dementia. It will also map local services and supports.

The Dementia: Understand Together has been working with individuals, businesses, organisations and communities to take steps in creating inclusive and supportive environments for people with dementia. Radio and television advertisements have featured prominently, and continue to play a role in combatting the stigma and social isolation that a diagnosis of dementia often causes.

Recognising that many people with dementia wish to continue living in their own homes and communities, and that flexible, person-centred services are an integral component of supporting people to remain at home, dementia specific intensive home care packages have been introduced to assist people with dementia who have complex needs. Funding which had been granted by Atlantic for the first three years has been replaced by resources from the HSE. At the end of April, 316 people had benefitted from a package, with 147 active at that point. The HSE has committed to continue funding the delivery of intensive home care packages to people with dementia.

A number of additional actions within the National Dementia Strategy are being addressed. Funding for these actions has been secured through the Dormant Accounts Fund, with the Department securing €2.28 million through the 2016 and 2017 Action Plans. These projects include a dementia diagnostic programme, a post-diagnostic support pathway, the development of a network of memory technology resource rooms, the mapping of dementia specific community based services, and the creation of a dementia registry.

On Wednesday 23rd May, a mid-term review of the implementation of the National Dementia Strategy was launched, fulfilling a commitment made by the Department. This Review provides an overview of work completed to date and work ongoing for each action identified in the Strategy. Also contained is an action plan for the work of the National Dementia Office over the next 18 months.

A large scale external evaluation of the Strategy is currently being conducted, with the aim of detailing the level of success in improving the dementia care system and the extent to which programmes and activities have impacted on people with dementia and their families and carers. The results of this external evaluation will be available during Q1 2019.

The Department is committed to the full implementation of the National Dementia Strategy, and will continue to co-operate with the National Dementia Office and stakeholders in progressing actions contained in the Strategy.

This is an area that I am very conscious of and recognise that it needs more focus to deliver on the full strategy. I am also conscious that dementia is becoming a condition that affects more and more families across the country. I have already had high level meetings with my officials and the HSE to discuss further deliverables in the context of the estimates for budget 2019 and I hope to be able progress new measures at this time.

Hospital Facilities

128. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health his plans for a new neuro-interventional angiography suite at Beaumont Hospital; if there is a contingency plan should the suite cease to operate suddenly; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23453/18]

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.

Taoiseach's Meetings and Engagements

129. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Taoiseach the Heads of Government and State he plans to meet in the next threemonths. [23421/18]

The Taoiseach: A number of engagements are being planned with my EU and international counterparts over the coming months.

Yesterday, I hosted a meeting with the Prime Minister of South Korea, Lee Nak-yeon, here in Dublin and last week, I hosted the Belgian Prime Minister, Charles Michel. I met with Prime Minister May the previous week, when we were both in Sofia for the EU-Western Balkans Summit.

I have also invited the President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, to Dublin on 21 June and am pleased that he has accepted.

We will meet here on 21 June.

As the House is aware, I will travel to Brussels for a meeting of the European Council on the 28 and 29 June and, as usual, will report to the House both before and after that meeting.

A number of other bilateral meetings are being planned and will of course be announced

once they are confirmed.

Cabinet Committee Meetings

130. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach the Cabinet committee meetings he has attended since January 2018. [23339/18]

The Taoiseach: Since 1 January 2018 I have chaired eight Cabinet Committee meetings. In January I chaired meetings of Cabinet Committee A (Economy) and Cabinet Committee G (Justice and Equality); in February Cabinet Committee C (European Union, including Brexit), Cabinet Committee D (Infrastructure) and Cabinet Committee F (National Security); in March Cabinet Committee B (Social Policy and Public Services); and in April Cabinet Committee E (Health) and Cabinet Committee G (Justice and Equality).

Programme for Government Implementation

131. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach his plans to publish an update on the delivery of A Programme for a Partnership Government. [23340/18]

The Taoiseach: The Government recently approved its second Programme for a Partnership Government Annual Report which provides a comprehensive update on the progress since May 2017. The report will be laid before the Oireachtas in the near future.

Programme for Government Initiatives

132. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach the way in which the commitment in A Programme for a Partnership Government on supporting an enhanced approach to government by Ministers of State playing a more substantive role in decision-making is operating. [23342/18]

The Taoiseach: In addition to delegation orders that assign responsibility for specific statutory functions, I have also assigned Ministers of State specific responsibilities to progress and implement Programme for Government commitments. Following the appointment of Ministers of State a set of policy priorities was agreed between myself as Taoiseach, Cabinet Ministers and the Ministers of State.

On the establishment of the Government I met with each Minister and their Ministers of State on a bilateral basis to discuss their short, medium and long term policy priorities. Since then I have regularly met with the Ministers of State to receive their updates on the progress they have made on implementing their Programme for Government policy priorities.

Ministerial Transport

133. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Taoiseach the number of ministerial cars or vehicles in operation in each of the past six years; and the costs associated with same. [23355/18]

The Taoiseach: Responsibility for Ministerial transport rests with the Department of Justice and Equality. Since 2011 each Minister now uses their own personal car and can avail of two civilian drivers. As Taoiseach, I am provided with Garda transport and drivers for security

reasons. No Minister of State assigned to my Department is provided with Garda transport.

Departmental Contracts

134. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence 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]

135. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence 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; if contingency plans are in place if the company were to collapse; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21666/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 134 and 135 together.

As I indicated in reply to Parliamentary Question No. 79 of 9 May 2018, my Department has no record of awarding any contracts to the company referred to by the Deputy in the period since March 2011. In this context, I am not in a position to comment on the specific issues being raised by the Deputy.

Air Corps Expenditure

136. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the amount of money spent on overseas aircraft maintenance for the Air Corps in each of the past five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23688/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The Air Corps operate a fleet of fixed and rotary wing aircraft which provide military support to the Army and Naval Service, together with support for non-military air services such as Garda air support, air ambulance, fisheries protection and the Ministerial Air Transport Service.

As the Deputy will appreciate, all aircraft must undergo regular maintenance and scheduled overhauls to ensure that they are fully airworthy and meet the certification standards laid down for the aviation industry. I am advised that the Air Corps perform all first line maintenance across the fleet where possible while heavy/annual maintenance is outsourced abroad.

The information sought by the Deputy is set out in the table below.

Year	Total amount of money spent on overseas aircraft maintenance - (€000's)
2013	1,418
2014	1,170
2015	844
2016	1,741
2017	1,890

Ministerial Transport

137. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the number of ministerial cars or vehicles in operation in each of the past six years; and the costs associated with same. [24030/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): In my role as Minister of State with Responsibility for Defence, I have not been provided with a ministerial car from the Garda fleet.

Brexit Issues

138. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will report on the recent poll showing that 69% of persons in Northern Ireland wish to remain in the EU; and if he discussed same with his British counterpart. [23443/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The poll to which the deputy refers was published in a recent report entitled *'Northern Ireland and the UK's Exit from the EU: What do people think?'*. This report was prepared by a number of academics based at Queen's University Belfast and was funded by the UK's Economic and Social Research Council through its UK in a Changing Europe Initiative.

The report suggests that support for remaining within the EU has increased in Northern Ireland to 69% from the 56% who voted to remain in the June 2016 referendum. It is important to remember that the remain vote had a majority in 11 of 18 Northern Ireland constituencies. The poll also indicates that an even higher majority of 85% want to stay within the Single Market and the Customs Union.

This is in line with the position that the Irish Government has held since the beginning of the negotiations, which is that Ireland's interest is in trying to achieve an outcome as close as possible to the status quo on the island. Ideally, this would be achieved through the wider EU-UK future relationship agreement. Such an agreement would also minimise or eliminate any new frictions in East/West trade.

However, we need to have a backstop in case that proves not to be possible, and that backstop needs to be clearly defined as part of the Withdrawal Agreement.

The UK decision to leave the European Union poses unprecedented challenges for the island of Ireland. The decision to leave is one we regret, but we must ultimately accept the outcome, however narrowly it was decided.

All sides have been clear since the start that the unique situation on the island of Ireland requires unique solutions. This was confirmed in the EU-UK Joint Progress report of last December and this is our present focus in the negotiations. I have outlined this position repeatedly to my UK counterparts in the course of our engagements.

I routinely meet the Foreign Secretary at meetings of Foreign Ministers in an EU context, and internationally. Ireland and the United Kingdom share many areas of mutual interest and concern and we will continue to work together on areas of commonality.

Brexit Documents

139. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade his views on the rights and equality guarantees included in the current version of Article 1, Protocol 1, of the draft agreement on the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the EU. [23240/18]

140. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the provisions of European Union law that should be included in Annexe 1 to the protocol of the draft agreement on the withdrawal of the UK from the European Union. [23241/18]

141. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the enforcement and implementation mechanisms that will be available to persons protected by Article 1, Protocol 1, of the draft agreement on the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union. [23242/18]

143. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the pressure he is bringing to bear on Task Force 50 to ensure and enforce the rights and equality guarantees in Article 1, Protocol 1, of the draft agreement on the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union. [23244/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): I propose to take Questions Nos. 139 to 141, inclusive, and 143 together.

As co-guarantor of the Good Friday Agreement, the Government is determined to ensure that the Agreement in all its parts is fully protected throughout the process of the UK's withdrawal from the EU. This includes the rights and equality provisions of the Good Friday Agreement which are central to the Peace Process.

Our EU partners, including the Commission Taskforce, have shown solidarity and support in respect of Ireland's unique issues and concerns, including the protection of the Agreement. On 8 December last, a Joint Report between the EU and UK negotiators was agreed which included important commitments in respect of protecting the Agreement in all its parts. The draft Protocol on Ireland and Northern Ireland, which forms part of the draft Withdrawal Agreement, translates these commitments into a legal framework.

Article 1 of the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland provides that the UK will ensure that there is no diminution of rights, safeguards and equality of opportunity as set out in the Chapter of the Good Friday Agreement on Rights, Safeguards and Equality of Opportunity, resulting from the UK's withdrawal from the European Union. The Protocol also proposes that the UK would ensure no diminution in the area of protection against discrimination as enshrined in the provisions of EU law to be set out in Annex 1 to the Protocol. These commitments will be implemented through a dedicated mechanism.

On the question of the content of Annex 1 and the operation of the dedicated mechanism, work is ongoing in this regard, as provided for in the December Joint Report. The Government's aim is to secure a result which affords the greatest possible protection for rights in Northern Ireland following the UK's exit from the EU.

In addition to the "no diminution" commitment, the Protocol also importantly proposes that the UK would facilitate the related work of the institutions and bodies of the Good Friday Agreement, which includes the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, and the Joint Committee of both the Human Rights Commissions in both jurisdictions. The Protocol also clearly acknowledges that the people of Northern Ireland who choose to identify as Irish, and therefore as EU citizens, will continue to enjoy rights, opportunities and benefits of EU citizenship.

More work is required between the UK and EU on rights and equality issues, as is provided for in the Joint Report. The Government will continue to engage intensively on these issues, working with our EU partners and the Commission Taskforce and the UK, to ensure that the commitments made to date are delivered on in full. In this regard, maintaining frequent contact with our EU partners, including the Commission Taskforce, has been a priority for Ireland throughout the Article 50 negotiation process. Officials from my Department, in particular from the Permanent Representation in Brussels, have very regular, almost daily, engagement with the Commission Taskforce, including on issues relating to rights and the Good Friday Agreement.

Good Friday Agreement

142. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the way in which he plans to ensure that outstanding commitments from the Good Friday Agreement are brought forward in the context of securing an orderly withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union. [23243/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): Protecting the Good Friday Agreement in all of its parts and the gains of the peace process is at the forefront of the Government's approach to the Brexit negotiations. This includes maintaining EU support for the Peace Process, supporting continued North-South cooperation, and ensuring there is no border infrastructure of any kind on the island of Ireland, and that the rights of the people of Northern Ireland are protected.

In this regard, Ireland's interest is in trying to achieve an outcome as close as possible to the status quo on the island. Work on drafting the Withdrawal Agreement has been a key focus since December. Published on 28 February, the draft Withdrawal Agreement contains a Protocol on Ireland and Northern Ireland, which is an integral part of the Agreement.

The Protocol on Ireland and Northern Ireland clearly acknowledges that the people of Northern Ireland who choose to identify as Irish, and therefore as citizens of the EU, will continue to enjoy the rights, opportunities, and benefits that come with EU citizenship.

The Protocol also proposes that the UK ensures there will be no diminution of rights, as provided for in the Good Friday Agreement, including by respecting EU non-discrimination laws, and that these commitments are implemented through a dedicated mechanism.

More work will be required between the UK and the EU on rights and equality issues, as is provided for in the Joint Report, in phase two. The Government is also continuing to engage intensively on these issues.

At this point it is clear that, while there are areas in the Protocol where shared policy objectives have been identified, there are some fundamental issues that have yet to be resolved.

The current schedule of negotiations now underway between the EU and the UK is being taken forward with a view to continuing efforts to narrow the remaining gaps on the draft Protocol. The overall aim is to maintain full alignment with those rules of the Single Market and Customs Union that are necessary to protect the Good Friday Agreement in all of its parts including the gains of the Peace Process, North-South cooperation and the all-island economy as well as to avoid a hard border.

Significant progress is needed between now and the June European Council. At this stage in the negotiations, it is more important than ever that the UK provides more detailed and realistic proposals to the EU. We must have certainty in all scenarios on the commitments made

on Ireland and Northern Ireland.

Coordinators have agreed that negotiations will continue on a regular basis and Ireland will continue its close cooperation with Michel Barnier's team. This includes our involvement in discussions, where appropriate, while respecting the negotiation structures that have been mandated by the European Council.

Question No. 143 answered with Question No. 139.

Departmental Contracts

144. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade 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]

145. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade 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; if contingency plans are in place if the company were to collapse; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21666/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): I propose to take Questions Nos. 144 and 145 together.

My Department has an annual renewable contract for support and maintenance of a proprietary system developed by a company named Capita IB Solutions (Ireland) Ltd. The contract was put in place in 2012 following a competitive procurement process. The system provides for the online delivery of certain Consular services.

This service contract was renewed in April of 2018 for one year. The annual value of the contract is €19,388. The company also delivered €32,000 of enhancements in 2017.

The Department has no contract with any other firm named Capita or a variation of that name.

Middle East Issues

146. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he or his officials have spoken with the Israeli ambassador since Israel announced it does not agree with a UN inquiry into the killings following the disproportionate defence of the Israel-Gaza border on 14 May 2018; his views on whether the UN inquiry should go ahead; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23317/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): On Friday 18 May the UN Human Rights Council held a Special Session to consider the recent events in Gaza. The HRC adopted a resolution – which was co-sponsored by Ireland – which includes provision to establish a Commission of Inquiry into these events. The current President of the HRC will now take this forward.

Israeli Ministers have responded with public statements indicating that they refuse to recognise the inquiry, and will not co-operate with it. This is the same position taken by Israel in recent years in relation to previous UN inquiries, when non-cooperation was undertaken to the extent of refusing to allow the inquiry to enter the country and take evidence.

The Israeli response is not unexpected, but is nonetheless deeply regrettable. I and other EU Ministers have acknowledged Israel's right to defend itself, while at the same time making strong criticisms of what we saw as its excessive and unjustified use of force in this instance. Israel has claimed to have been engaged in legitimate self-defence, but its refusal to cooperate with scrutiny of that claim, and to explain and justify its actions, sends an unfortunate signal. The need for an international inquiry arose, in part, due to the fact that Israel did not conduct a comprehensive review of the use of deadly force on previous occasions.

I urge Israel to reconsider and to co-operate fully with the inquiry.

As I have stated in the Dáil, I called in the Ambassador of Israel on 15 May to convey to his Government my strong criticisms of their actions in this case and my full support for an independent international inquiry. I have not sought a further discussion with the Ambassador in relation to this inquiry as I had made my views on the need for it unambiguously clear to him. My officials are routinely in contact with the Embassy and will make clear our views of Israel's negative response to the inquiry.

Ministerial Travel

147. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade his plans to visit Israel and Gaza in the near future; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23318/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): I am planning to visit Israel and Palestine in early June, as part of a wider visit which also encompasses Jordan and Cyprus. This will be my third visit to the region in the last year.

The programme elements of the visit are in the course of being confirmed, and I will be happy to report back to the Oireachtas on my return. I will not on this occasion be visiting Gaza, which I visited in January. While my visit was planned before the recent tragic events there, the future for Gaza has been a priority concern for me since taking office, and I have only been reinforced in that view.

In my meetings in Israel and Palestine, I expect that among the main issues to be discussed will be the prospects for resuming the peace process; recent events, including the terrible loss of life in Gaza; and ideas which I have pursued on my earlier visits for practical measures which might help improve conditions for the people there.

Brexit Negotiations

148. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the status of his officials' continued talks on Brexit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23319/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): Maintaining frequent contact with Mr Barnier and the Article 50 Taskforce continues to be a priority for Ireland. In addition to my personal engagement with Mr Barnier, our Permanent Repre-

sentative and in Brussels and his team continue to have very regular, almost daily, engagement with the Taskforce. Officials from Dublin also travel regularly to Brussels for meetings with the Taskforce and other Directorates General.

The ongoing negotiations between the EU and UK are focused on all outstanding issues in the draft Withdrawal Agreement, including the Protocol on Ireland and Northern Ireland, as well as the future relationship. The latest negotiating round took place last week.

Negotiations to close the remaining gaps in the draft Withdrawal Agreement are ongoing, including detailed discussions between the EU and the UK on issues relating to Ireland and Northern Ireland. This has included our involvement in discussions, where appropriate, while respecting the negotiation structures that have been mandated by the European Council.

Real and substantial progress is needed on agreeing the Protocol ahead of the June European Council. This means the UK delivering on the clear commitments it has made in December and again in March by engaging meaningfully on the text of the Protocol in the coming weeks, and in particular the text dealing with the backstop on avoiding a hard border. So far, the pace of negotiations has been disappointing. The UK needs urgently to come forward with workable proposals which could form a serious basis for seeking agreement on the text so that the entire withdrawal agreement can be concluded by October.

The EU has always made clear that “*nothing is agreed until everything is agreed*” and that negotiations can only progress as long as all commitments undertaken so far are respected in full. The European Council (Article 50) is therefore continuing to follow the negotiations closely and will return in particular to the remaining withdrawal issues, including the Protocol, and to the framework for the future relationship at its meeting on 29 June. This meeting will be prepared by the General Affairs Council (Article 50) at its meeting on 26 June, which I expect to attend.

Northern Ireland

149. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the contacts he has had with the Secretary for State for Northern Ireland on reconvening the Northern Ireland Assembly; if he has spoken to the leaders of the DUP or Sinn Féin recently in relation to same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23320/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): Over the course of many months, the Irish and British Governments, as co-guarantors of the Good Friday Agreement, have worked tirelessly to support and facilitate the parties in their efforts to form an Executive.

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

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

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

I am in very regular contact with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Karen Bradley, as we seek a way beyond the current impasse.

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

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

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

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

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

Ministerial Transport

150. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the number of ministerial cars or vehicles in operation in each of the past six years; and the costs associated with same. [24031/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The information requested by the Deputy will be provided by the Minister for Justice and Equality, Mr. Charlie Flanagan TD, in response to an identical question put down to him for answer today.

Insurance Compensation Fund

151. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Finance when the relevant legislation protecting the persons who are owed money by a company (details supplied) will be introduced; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23099/18]

186. **Deputy Fergus O’Dowd** asked the Minister for Finance the position in terms of compensation and responsibility of the Government in relation to outstanding claims made against a company (details supplied) before it collapsed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23405/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 151 and 186 together.

Setanta Insurance was placed into liquidation by the Malta Financial Services Authority on 30 April 2014. As it was a Maltese incorporated company, the liquidation is being carried out under Maltese law.

The Deputy will be aware that under the Insurance Act 1964, as amended, monies may be paid out of the Insurance Compensation Fund (ICF), with the approval of the High Court, in relation to an insolvent insurer, to meet claims up to a limit of 65% or €825,000 of the claim, whichever is the lesser.

The Deputy will also be aware of my decision in principle that the State will ensure that Setanta third party claimants are compensated in full, which was announced on 30 January. My Department has subsequently received confirmation from the Office of the Attorney General that there are no state-aid or other legal issues with this decision, and therefore an additional provision to give effect to it is being included in the Insurance (Amendment) Bill, which has now been finalised in liaison with the Office of Parliamentary Counsel. I expect to bring this Bill to Government for approval to publish shortly. I am hoping that, with the cooperation of Members of the House, the Bill will pass all Stages in an efficient manner. Once enacted, it will allow for the payment of 100% of the compensation due to Setanta third party motor insurance claimants including the additional 35% to those who have settled their claims and have already received compensation of 65% of their claim subject to the limit outlined above.

It is however important to note that only claims which have been settled can be included in applications to the High Court for payment from the ICF. The process of settling claims is still ongoing and is subject in some cases to complex negotiations between all relevant parties. It is hoped that by the State taking steps to ensure that third party claimants are compensated in full, this will continue to encourage the settlement of all outstanding claims as quickly as possible.

Credit Union Services

152. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Finance the criteria for credit unions to deliver a debit card facility to their members. [23103/18]

153. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Finance if a credit union with an asset base of €50 million is permitted to provide a debit card facility to its members. [23104/18]

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

The Credit Union Act, 1997 (1997 Act) sets out the services that a credit union may provide to its members. In addition, the Credit Union Act 1997 (Regulatory Requirements) Regulations 2016 (2016 Regulations) provides for services exempt from additional services requirements. Where a credit union wishes to provide services to its members, other than those services that are provided for under the 1997 Act or the list of services exempt from the additional services requirements set out in the 2016 Regulations, an application may be made to the Central Bank for approval to provide such additional services, in accordance with the provisions in sections 48-52 of the 1997 Act.

Debit card provision is subject to formal application and approval by the Central Bank, whether it be direct provision or distribution of third party debit cards under sections 48 and 49 of the Credit Union Act.

There is currently a fully defined current account service including debit card, Members Personal Current Account Services (MPCAS) which is available to eligible credit unions as an additional service. The current eligibility criteria include a suggested minimum asset size of €75 million, reflecting the need for significant initial investment in start up initiatives of this nature. This also recognises the importance of transaction volume necessary for scale discounts which requires the participation of larger credit unions. The business of providing payment

service instruments such as debit cards on current accounts is a complex, sophisticated and regulated business activity requiring a distinct business model and associated risk management capabilities and capacities. Furthermore, the provision of such services requires on-going investment, volume pricing and access to technical expertise which given typical credit union size is likely to require a shared service model. The suggested limit may be re-examined once the framework is established and operational for some time, at which stage, smaller credit unions will have greater clarity regarding cost, experience and operational considerations necessary for informed decision making on participation.

Details and applications forms are available on the Central Bank website. <https://www.centralbank.ie/docs/default-source/Regulation/industry-market-sectors/credit-unions/applying-for-approvals/mpcas-application-form.pdf>. The Central Bank has also indicated it is open to applications for alternative debit card proposals and recommends the MPCAS framework as a scalar template for such alternative proposals.

The Central Bank has approved 43 credit unions for MPCAS and have another 9 in progress. Combined these 52 credit unions have €7.6 billion in assets.

In respect of a further option, prepaid debit cards, there has been little interest to date albeit the operational considerations and costs are less onerous.

The Government wants not only strong, vibrant credit unions offering a safe and secure place for members' savings but also credit unions being appropriately positioned to offer their members a wide range of services including loans, debit card facilities and new products and services based on the needs of their membership.

Tax Reliefs Availability

154. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Finance the status of the rural renewal scheme in terms of the benefits for mortgage relief; the length of time for which this and other benefits under the scheme will be available; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23108/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The rural renewal scheme provided for a scheme of tax reliefs aimed at invigorating certain areas of rural Ireland. Relief is only available for expenditure on construction, refurbishment or conversion work that was carried out during the qualifying period for the scheme. The qualifying period for the rural renewal scheme originally terminated on 31 December 2004 but was extended to 31 December 2006 where a valid application for full planning permission was submitted to the relevant local authority by 31 December 2004. The qualifying period was further extended to 31 July 2008, subject to the additional requirement that work to the value of at least 15% of the actual construction, refurbishment or conversion costs must have been carried by 31 December 2006.

While the scheme has been terminated, tax relief may continue to be claimed on expenditure incurred prior to the termination date in question.

There is no mortgage relief available under the scheme. The benefit available is tax relief in the form of:

- accelerated capital allowances in respect of capital expenditure incurred on the construction or refurbishment of certain industrial and commercial buildings or structures,
- a deduction against rental income in respect of expenditure on the construction, conversion

or refurbishment of certain residential property, and

- a deduction against total income for expenditure incurred by owner-occupiers on the construction, conversion or refurbishment of residential property.

The accelerated capital allowances are available at a rate of 50% of expenditure in the first year and 4% thereafter. Additionally, owner-occupiers (traders) could opt to claim free depreciation, which is an acceleration of the normal annual allowance, of up to 50%. In relation to the deduction against rental income, this is given in full in the first year that the property is let. Any unused relief is carried forward against rental income in future years. The deduction for owner-occupiers of residential property is given at a rate of 5% over 10 years in the case of construction expenditure and 10% over 10 years in the case of conversion or refurbishment expenditure.

Tax Collection

155. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Finance the estimated tax yield lost to the Revenue Commissioners due to the non-enforcement of a foreign artists withholding tax on visiting artists earning income from performances within the State; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23119/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The only foreign artiste withholding tax which Ireland has is the film withholding tax (“FWT”). FWT is a 20% withholding tax that applies for certain payments to non-resident artistes. FWT only applies to non-resident artistes, who are resident outside the EU/EEA and who are engaged by companies qualifying for the film tax credit under section 481 TCA. It does not apply to support staff such as cameramen, producers, directors etc.

The FWT cannot apply to other artistes such as international music artistes who perform concerts in the State. I am informed by Revenue that there are no specific tax exemptions available to international artistes performing in the State. Artistes who are not resident in the State for tax purposes have a liability to Irish tax on income arising from the exercise of their profession in the State. However, because foreign resident artistes merely have a transitory presence in the State, there are numerous practical difficulties associated with enforcing such a liability. Where non-resident entertainers do not file an Irish tax return, there is no effective mechanism to quantify the potential tax exposure of such entertainers on the income related to their Irish performances and to collect any tax owing. However, an alternative system which would impose an obligation on paying agents to deduct tax from payments made to foreign entertainers and account for the tax to Revenue, would also present many difficulties such as the requirement to identify the paying agent, in order to enforce collection, as well as placing a costly compliance burden, both on Revenue and the non-resident artistes and paying agents. Imposing tax therefore would be administratively cumbersome relative to the potentially small prospective yield and would also undoubtedly discourage some artistes from performing in the State.

I can however advise the Deputy that in general where a concert takes place in Ireland, the artistes performance fee is subject to Irish VAT. Where an international performer is engaged by a promoter, it is the responsibility of the promoter to account for the VAT due on the performance fee. This means that where the promoter is established in Ireland, the promoter is required to account for Irish VAT on the performance fee. In circumstances where the artiste and promoter are both established outside the State, the promoter is required to account for VAT on the performance fee where she/he is established.

In addition, where a premises provider allows a promoter who is not established in the State

to hold a concert on their premises, the provider must report details of the event to Revenue. Failure to do so can make the premises provider jointly liable for any VAT arising. This is a safeguard provision to ensure the correct VAT is collected and paid in relation to any merchandise sold at the concert venue.

Mortgage Resolution Processes

156. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the definition of a non-performing loan, NPL, in the context of buy-to-let mortgages; if such a loan can be deemed to be an NPL if the terms of an agreement have been honoured for a number of years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23139/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The definition of a non-performing buy to let loan is the same as that of any other credit exposure and applies to exposures which are more than 90 days past-due; and/or the borrower is assessed as unlikely to pay their credit obligations in full without realisation of collateral, regardless of the existence of any past-due amount or of the number of days past due.

In relation to the second part of the Deputy's question, the classification as non-performing depends on the particular circumstances of each individual loan, and is subject to internal assessment by each bank and review by that bank's external auditor. Accordingly, it would not be appropriate for me to speculate on such a matter.

Finally, I note the Deputy asked a related question regarding buy to let mortgages which I answered on 20th March and for reference a link is provided here: <https://www.oireachtas.ie/index.php/en/debates/question/2018-03-20/72/?highlight%5B0%5D=michael&highlight%5B1%5D=mcgrath>.

Tax Rebates

157. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the position on issuing of tax refunds to a person (details supplied) in County Cork. [23168/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am advised by Revenue that the refunds in question were approved and processed on 23 May 2018. The refunds will be credited to the person's bank account in the coming days.

Mortgage Repayments

158. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the position on allowing mortgage holders make their normal repayments on a weekly or fortnightly basis as opposed to monthly in an effort to reduce their interest bill; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23169/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Mortgage and other loan agreements will contain terms for the repayment of the credit, including in relation to the timing and frequency of the repayments. It would also be open to the parties to agree any adjustment to the repayment terms as considered desirable during the life of the credit agreement.

The Central Bank advises that there are no particular regulatory measures governing the

frequency of mortgage repayments and that these would be contractual matters for the parties to the credit agreement. Nevertheless, it could also be noted that, more generally, a consumer borrower has the right to discharge, either fully or partially, his or her obligations under a mortgage credit agreement prior to the expiry of that agreement. In such cases, the consumer shall be entitled to a reduction in the total cost of the credit (consisting of interest and costs) arising from that early repayment for the remaining duration of the contract. However, in certain circumstances where the interest rate is fixed for a period of time the lender may be entitled to compensation arising from the early repayment of some or all of the outstanding credit amount.

Banking Sector Regulation

159. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the position concerning financial institutions adding their legal fees to the arrears of a borrower, including mortgage holders and SME borrowers; the amount of such legal fees incurred by financial institutions that have been added to mortgage and other debt in recent years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23170/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I have been advised by the Central Bank of Ireland that under Provision 14(1)(h) of the European Union (Consumer Mortgage Credit Agreements) Regulations 2016 (‘Mortgage Credit Regulations’), the lender must make available to the borrower, on paper or another durable medium, “an indication of possible further costs, not included in the total cost of the credit to the consumer, to be paid in connection with a credit agreement.”

Under Provision 29(2), any charge that a creditor may impose on a consumer arising from the consumer’s default “shall be no greater than is necessary to compensate the creditor for the costs it has incurred as a result of the default.”

Under Provision 11 of the Code of Conduct on Mortgage Arrears (CCMA), lenders are restricted from imposing charges and/or surcharge interest on arrears arising on a mortgage account in arrears, unless the borrower is not co-operating. Under Provision 14, a lender must prepare and make available to borrowers an information booklet with details of its Mortgage Arrears Resolution Process (MARP), which must include with regard to legal proceedings, a statement that, irrespective of how the property is repossessed or disposed of, the borrower will remain liable for the outstanding debt, including any accrued interest, charges, legal, selling and other related costs, if this is the case.

The arrears handling provisions in Chapter 8 of the Consumer Protection Code apply to loans to which the CCMA does not apply. Provision 8.9 provides that in respect of a mortgage, where a third full or partial repayment is missed and remains outstanding and an alternative repayment arrangement has not been put in place, a regulated entity must notify the personal consumer, on paper on another durable medium, of the potential for legal proceedings and proceedings for repossession of the property, together with an estimate of the costs to the personal consumer of such proceedings.

Under the SME Regulations, lenders must prepare and make available to borrowers an information booklet containing an explanation that the regulated entity may be entitled to impose additional fees or charges on borrowers in financial difficulties in accordance with the terms and conditions of the credit facility agreement.

The Central Bank has also informed me that it does not have information on the amount of legal fees incurred by financial institutions as this would be a supervisory matter.

Disabled Drivers and Passengers Scheme

160. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if the Revenue Commissioners are re-examining the classification of personal contract plan, PCP, arrangements as lease agreements as opposed to hire purchase agreements for the purpose of the disabled drivers and passengers tax concession scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23179/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The qualifying provisions for the Disabled Drivers and Passengers Scheme are contained in Statutory Instrument No. 353 of 1994 (Disabled Drivers and Disabled Passengers (Tax Concessions) Regulations 1994). Regulations 8 (disabled drivers), 10 (disabled passengers) and 12 (organisations) provide that a vehicle must be “purchased” by the person or organisation.

Revenue guidance allowed for vehicles acquired under traditional hire purchase agreements to be eligible on the basis that such agreements, by design, are intended to lead to the outright purchase of the vehicle. As such this position is consistent with the principle of a scheme member being required to purchase their vehicle. PCP finance agreements, due to the option of rolling over into a new PCP contract with a new car, is different and in practice could be considered as close if not closer to a lease finance agreement.

I am informed by Revenue that there have been a number of refusals issued in relation to PCP Finance Agreements but these are currently being reviewed to establish if they qualify for the Scheme. In conjunction, I am currently considering the position in relation to clarifying the eligibility of PCP finance agreements under the Scheme in the Regulations.

Vehicle Registration

161. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Finance the calculation method used for vehicle registration tax; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23180/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am advised by Revenue that, for the majority of vehicles, vehicle registration tax (VRT) is charged on the open market selling price (OMSP) of the vehicle which is defined in section 133, Finance Act 1992 as the price of the vehicle, including all taxes and duties, that a manufacturer or distributor can reasonably expect to fetch on a first arm’s length sale by retail. The calculation method is provided for in section 132, Finance Act 1992 by VRT category as follows:

- VRT category A (passenger cars): the charge is a percentage, determined by the vehicle’s CO2 emissions level, of the OMSP of the vehicle;

- VRT category B (light commercials and motor caravans): the charge is 13.3% of the OMSP of the vehicle; and

- VRT category C (heavier commercials, buses, tractors): the charge is €200 per vehicle.

I am further advised by Revenue that, for a used vehicle, a depreciation is applied to the OMSP of the vehicle before registration taking into account the vehicle’s age and use.

Information in respect of calculating VRT is on the Revenue website at: <https://www.revenue.ie/en/importing-vehicles-duty-free-allowances/guide-to-vrt/calculating-vrt/index.aspx>

162. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Finance when in 2018 the national economic dialogue will take place; if representatives of civic society bodies, such as those from the disability advocacy sector, will be invited; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23185/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The National Economic Dialogue 2018 will take place on 27-28 June.

The Dialogue will be an opportunity for stakeholders from a variety of backgrounds to consider how to optimise available resources in the interests of all citizens.

Several civic society bodies representing community and voluntary groups, employers, trade unions, agriculture and the environmental groups have been invited, including the disability advocacy sector.

VAT Yield

163. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Finance the annual VAT intake in 2017 on plastics and materials used in the production of fodder and silage; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23193/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am advised by Revenue that traders are not required to separately identify the yield generated from a particular activity or product type on their VAT returns. The information is therefore not available to provide an estimate of the VAT received from plastics and materials used in the production of fodder and silage.

The VAT charged on plastics and materials used in the production of fodder and silage can be recovered by VAT registered agricultural contractors, who in turn charge VAT on the supply of their services to farmers. VAT registered farmers are also entitled to recover this and other VAT borne on their input costs, while flat rate farmers are compensated for the VAT borne on their input costs through the flat rate addition applied to their supplies. The VAT borne on the production of fodder and silage making and other expenses associated with agricultural production are included in calculating the amount of the flat rate addition each year.

Insurance Industry

164. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Finance when he expects the insurance accident claims database, to be administered by the Central Bank, to come into operation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23198/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The development of the National Claims Information Database is a complex project as insurers very often record data in different ways and do not necessarily use the same definitions. On 19 December 2017, the Government approved the General Scheme of the Central Bank (National Claims Information Database) Bill. The Bill is included in the Government Legislative Programme on the list of Priority Legislation for publication this session. The Joint Oireachtas Committee on Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform and the Taoiseach indicated to me in February that it would not be conducting pre-legislative scrutiny on the Bill.

The Office of the Parliamentary Counsel assigned a drafter to the Bill on 26 January 2017 and officials in the Department of Finance are currently working with the drafter to finalise a draft of the Bill as soon as possible. I understand that good progress has been made and I am

hopeful that a Bill will be published before the end of this legislative Session. A consultation will also have to take place with the European Central Bank on the Bill once it is published.

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

To ensure that the Database can be operationalised quickly following the enactment of the legislation, the Central Bank has continued to work in parallel on the technical specification for the Database.

Insurance Industry

165. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Finance the steps he is taking to ensure that consumers receive the full benefit of the single EU market for all insurance products; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23199/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I would like to clarify at the outset that it is possible for an insurance undertaking authorised in one member state to conduct business in another EU/EEA state either through:

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

In relation to motor insurance, the undertaking is required to meet certain obligations in the host member state, such as becoming a member of the national bureau and the national guarantee fund. These are important requirements as the Bureau is tasked with meeting the requirement of compensating victims of accidents caused by uninsured and unidentified vehicles.

Notwithstanding the extent of the existing framework, the Cost of Insurance Working Group, chaired by Minister of State Michael D’Arcy, T.D., heard from a number of stakeholders, particularly in relation to motor insurance, the view that there is room for further harmonisation in cross-border insurance. The Working Group concluded however, this is a pan-European issue which will only be resolved at that level.

Consistent with the Working Group’s recommendation, my Department is monitoring developments at EU level on an ongoing basis in relation to the issue of cross-border insurance provision and has instructed the Irish Permanent Representation to the EU to hold consultations in Brussels with relevant institutions on issues raised in the two Cost of Insurance Working Group Reports. However, it is important to note that work at EU level very much depends on the priorities of the European Institutions, especially in the context of the ongoing negotiations with the UK as regard its exit from the EU.

An update on this work was included in the Fifth Quarterly Update Report, which is available at the Department of Finance’s website at: <http://www.finance.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/5th-Progress-Update-Q1-2018-Focus.pdf>

The current position at EU level is as follows:

- The Central Bank of Ireland (CBI) has an ongoing engagement with the relevant European authorities in order to ensure common standards are applied consistently. In addition, the CBI

fully participates in EIOPA (the EU overarching insurance regulatory body) to establish high quality common regulatory and supervisory standards and procedures. EIOPA is also due to report in 2019 on the barriers to providing cross-border insurance in general. The Department of Finance and the CBI will feed into the development of this report to ensure that the existing market for insurance is improved as much as possible.

- In relation to motor insurance in particular, on 24 May 2018 the European Commission published a proposal for a revised Directive on Motor Insurance. The proposal covers a range of issues including the portability of claims history statements throughout the EU and guarantees towards victims in cases of insurer's insolvency. These issues are relevant to the work of the Cost of Insurance Working Group and I welcome the publication of the proposal.

Finally, an important point to note is that in considering whether to take on Irish risk business, an insurer will look at a wide range of factors including the award levels, the legal system, the general claims culture etc. Therefore ultimately, even if we do get a more efficient and more accessible EU insurance market, there can be no guarantees that insurers in other jurisdictions will automatically be willing to take on Irish risk.

Insurance Compensation Fund

166. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the number of open claims in relation to the liquidation of a company (details supplied); the number and value of outstanding claims in which the claimant has not received compensation; the number and value of outstanding claims in which the claimant has received partial compensation from the Insurance Compensation Fund; the estimated proceeds from the liquidation based on the most up to date information; when the legislation to address with the issue will be introduced; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23202/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Setanta Insurance was placed into liquidation by the Malta Financial Services Authority on 30 April 2014. As it was a Maltese incorporated company, the liquidation is being carried out under Maltese law.

The Deputy will be aware that under the Insurance Act 1964, as amended, monies may be paid out of the Insurance Compensation Fund (ICF), with the approval of the High Court, in relation to an insolvent insurer, to meet claims up to a limit of 65% or €825,000 of the claim, whichever is the lesser.

The Deputy will also be aware of my decision in principle that the State will ensure that Setanta third party claimants are compensated in full, which was announced on 30 January. My Department has received confirmation from the Office of the Attorney General that there are no state-aid or other legal issues with this decision, and has therefore proceeded with the detailed arrangements to implement it. An additional provision to give effect to this decision is being included in the Insurance (Amendment) Bill, which has now been finalised by my officials in liaison with the Office of Parliamentary Counsel. I expect to bring this Bill to Government for approval to publish shortly. I am hoping that, with the cooperation of Members of the House, the Bill will pass all Stages in an efficient manner. Once enacted, it will allow for the payment of 100% of the compensation due to Setanta third party motor insurance claimants including the additional 35% to those who have settled their claims and have already received compensation of 65% of their claim subject to the limit outlined above.

To date, there have been three applications to the High Court for payment of compensation from the ICF in relation to Setanta Insurance. Orders were granted in the High Court on 11

May 2018, 24 July 2017 and 15 November 2016. The total amount paid out of the ICF on foot of these orders is €14.6 million being 65% of the total value of the settled claims.

The liquidator for Setanta Insurance has informed me that as no settled claims have yet been paid in full, there remain 1,577 active claims of which 826 claimants have been paid compensation from the ICF subject to the 65%/€825,000 limits. A further 117 claimants have settled their claims since the last tranche was submitted to the State Claims Agency for verification. These claims will be included in the next application to the High Court and are to the value of €5.1 million being 100% of the total value of the settled claims.

In addition to this, there are 645 claimants whose personal injuries claims (some of who also have damage claims) have not yet been settled and a further 223 claimants whose damage only claims have not yet been settled. In the case of the numbers of claimants, there may be more than one claimant associated with each claim.

It is important to note that only claims which have been settled can be included in an application to the High Court for payment from the ICF. The process of settling claims is still ongoing and it is hoped that my decision to compensate third party claimants in full will continue to facilitate and accelerate this process.

In relation to the value of claims outstanding it is not possible to answer this question as these claims have not been settled, however as you know, the Liquidator commissioned actuarial consultants, Willis Towers Watson, to carry out an analysis of Setanta Insurance's claims reserves as at 30 June 2017. The report estimates the claims reserves at between €105.9 million and €112.9 million.

A consequence of this is that based on this actuarial report, the liquidator now estimates that he will not be in a position to meet more than 22% of the claims out of the assets of the liquidation once all matters in the liquidation have been concluded, rather than the not more than 30% of claims figure previously indicated.

Tax Code

167. Deputy Pearse Doherty asked the Minister for Finance the tax exempt status of Irish pension funds that acquire property directly with no tax on the rental income of the pension fund and no capital gains tax were the pension to sell the property and make a gain. [23205/18]

168. Deputy Pearse Doherty asked the Minister for Finance if his attention has been drawn to the tax neutral status of a company's (details supplied) rental income from the 262 apartments which it recently purchased in Churchtown, Dublin, due to the fact it is a pension and regulated fund, therefore exempt from dividend withholding tax under the Irish real estate fund regime. [23206/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 167 and 168 together.

I am advised by Revenue that income from investments - including rental income on property investments - made by approved pension funds is exempt from income tax by virtue of section 774(3) Taxes Consolidation Act 1997 (TCA). Section 608(2) TCA grants exemption from capital gains tax on gains accruing on the disposal of investments, including property, held by pension funds approved under section 774 TCA. Benefits payable on or after retirement are taxable, subject to an entitlement to take a tax-free lump-sum.

There are restrictions on how these reliefs and exemptions apply. For example, where a pension fund acquires property which is to be used in any business of the sponsoring employer or a connected person, or where it sells assets to the employer or a connected person, the assets in question are treated as a pension paid under the fund and are subject to tax and any amount treated as a pension payment is no longer regarded as a fund asset.

In relation to Irish Real Estate Funds (“IREFs”), these are investment undertakings that derive 25% or more of their value from Irish real estate. I am not in a position to comment on a specific case, but the following comments apply to any approved pension fund which holds units in an IREF.

Pension fund providers utilise the funds received from their customers to invest, on their behalf, in a diverse portfolio of assets with a view to providing those customers with a pension upon their retirement. Pension fund providers may invest some funds in units in IREFs on behalf of their customers as a way of gaining exposure to a wider portfolio of Irish real estate than would otherwise be possible. In the case of smaller pension funds, it might not be possible to invest any funds in property if the entire property had to be acquired by the pension fund. Accordingly the potential to invest in units in an IREF provides some pension funds with the ability to include an exposure to Irish real estate where otherwise this opportunity would not be available.

The legislation surrounding the operation of withholding tax on IREF taxable events is contained in section 739P of the Taxes Consolidation Act (“TCA”) 1997. The definition of a ‘specified person’ for the purposes of section 739P TCA 1997 does not include a pension fund provided the IREF is in possession of a valid declaration from the pension fund in advance of the IREF taxable event. If the pension fund provides a valid declaration to the IREF in advance of the IREF taxable event then the IREF will not operate withholding tax.

Just as pension funds would not be subject to tax on profits or gains on Irish property if they held the property directly, they equally do not suffer IREF withholding tax where the exposure to Irish real estate is through such an investment vehicle. Of course as with any pension fund the benefits are taxable on the pension holders upon their retirement irrespective of whether their funds were invested by the pension fund directly in Irish real estate or indirectly through units in an IREF.

Irish Real Estate Fund

169. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the net receipts from dividend withholding tax from the IREF regime in 2017 and to April 2018. [23207/18]

170. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the net receipts from dividend withholding tax from the REIT regime in 2017 and to April 2018. [23208/18]

171. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the estimated value of Irish real estate owned by REITs, IREFs and pension funds. [23209/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 169 to 171, inclusive, together.

In relation to 23207/18, the Irish Real Estate Fund (IREF) regime was introduced by Finance Act 2016 and takes effect for accounting periods commencing on or after 1 January 2017. I am advised by Revenue that where a fund has an accounting period that ended in the second half of 2017, the return and payment date for IREF withholding tax deducted is 31 July 2018.

Once those returns have been filed and analysed Revenue will be in a position to provide detail on net receipts from dividend withholding tax from IREFs.

The Deputy may note that the research paper on Corporation Tax published by Revenue in April includes a detailed discussion of the timing of returns in the Appendix, available at: <https://www.revenue.ie/en/corporate/documents/research/ct-analysis-2018.pdf>.

In relation to Question 23208/18, I am advised by Revenue that net dividend withholding tax amounting to €11.8m in 2017 and €5.9m in 2018 (to April) was collected in respect of dividends paid by REITs.

In relation to 23209/18, I am advised by Revenue that REITs are required to file financial statements, which include the value of their Irish real estate. However, due to the obligation on Revenue to protect the confidentiality of taxpayer information, and the small number of taxpayers involved, the requested information cannot be provided.

I am further advised by Revenue that it is not possible to identify the value of Irish real estate held by pension funds from the information filed (with Revenue). In relation to IREFs, I am advised by Revenue that the returns due in July will include details on the value of real estate held (by IREFs), broken down into certain categories (e.g. residential, commercial, etc.). Once those returns have been filed and analysed, Revenue will be in a position to provide more detail on the value of Irish real estate owned by IREFs, subject to the normal confidentiality constraints.

Home Building Finance Ireland

172. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Finance the estimated number of NAMA staff that will transfer into Home Building Finance Ireland; the date on which they will transfer; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23224/18]

173. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Finance the status of the establishment of Home Building Finance Ireland; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23225/18]

184. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Finance the status of the setting up of Home Building Finance Ireland; when he expects this to be delivered; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23362/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 172, 173 and 184 together.

As announced in my Budget speech on 10 October 2017, Home Building Finance Ireland (HBFI) is to be established to provide funding on market terms to viable residential development projects whose owners are experiencing difficulty in obtaining debt funding. Up to €750 million of ISIF funds will be allocated to HBFI to provide funding on market terms and the fund is estimated to have capacity to finance about 6,000 homes in the coming years.

The establishment of HBFI is a key priority for Government and the drafting of legislation is progressing as quickly as possible. Officials in the Department of Finance and the Office of Parliamentary Counsel (OPC) are currently finalising the legal text of the HBFI Bill and I intend to publish the draft legislation in the coming weeks.

In parallel to the ongoing work involved in drafting the text of the Bill, officials in my

department have been engaging with the European Commission in order to ensure that the establishment and operation of HBFI complies with EU State aid rules and also engaging with industry and other stakeholders.

Once published in the coming weeks I am hopeful that the Oireachtas will be in a position to pass the HBFI Bill before the end of the Spring/Summer legislative term, with a view to HBFI commencing operations later in 2018.

HBFI will be designed to leverage off the extensive experience already available to the State to deliver this initiative and as such existing NAMA staff skills and expertise will be utilised to deliver this funding. It will be for the Board of HBFI, once constituted, to determine the exact staffing requirements of the fund with reference to its functions. It is envisaged that the HBFI Board, in consultation with the Board of the NTMA and with the approval of the Chief Executive and Board of NAMA, will determine the number of staff to be transferred from NAMA once HBFI is operational. It is expected that the assignment of staff to HBFI will commence shortly after the enactment of the legislation establishing HBFI.

Tax Reliefs Application

174. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Finance the estimated full year cost of restoring tax relief for trade union subscriptions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23246/18]

179. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the position in relation to tax relief for trade union members on the subscriptions paid to their union; the background to the issue; the estimated cost of changing the system now to reinstate tax relief; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23277/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 174 and 179 together.

A review of the appropriate treatment for tax purposes of trade union subscriptions and professional body fees was carried out by my Department in 2016 and included in the 2016 report on tax expenditures published on Budget day 2016. The review may be found at the following link:

(http://www.budget.gov.ie/Budgets/2017/Documents/Tax_Expenditures_Report%202016_final.pdf).

The review concluded that:

“...analysis of the scheme using the principles laid down by the Department’s Tax Expenditure Guidelines shows that it fails to reach the evaluation threshold to warrant introduction in this manner.

The reinstatement of this tax relief would have no justifiable policy rationale and does not express a defined policy objective. Given that individuals join trade unions largely for the well-known benefits of membership, and the potential value of the relief to an individual would equate to just over €1 per week, this scheme would have little to no incentive effect on the numbers choosing to join. There is no specific market failure that needs to be addressed by such a scheme, and it would consist largely of deadweight.”

Given the conclusions of the review, I have no plans to reintroduce such a relief.

I am advised by Revenue that the cost and the numbers availing of the relief prior to its abolition are available at <https://www.revenue.ie/en/corporate/information-about-revenue/statistics/tax-expenditures/costs-expenditures.aspx>.

The table sets out details of the cost of the relief in the seven years immediately prior to its end.

Year	Cost (€ - million)	No. of Claims
2004	10.7	248,300
2005	11.8	272,100
2006	19.2	294,300
2007	20.7	316,300
2008	26.4	341,900
2009	26.7	345,800
2010	26	337,500

I am further advised by Revenue that these figures may not provide an accurate indicator of future costs of a new scheme and there is no other basis available to Revenue on which to estimate such costs.

Property Ownership

175. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if there is an industry standard procedure for persons to retrieve the deeds of their property from their bank in circumstances in which the property is now mortgage free; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23250/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am informed by the Central Bank that it is not aware of any particular industry standard governing the holding or retrieving of title deeds in respect of unencumbered property and such a matter is not covered by the Central Bank codes or other financial services regulatory framework. Matters relating to the framework for the registration and demonstration of ownership and title in property (and any charges attached to a property) more generally are a matter for the Department of Justice and Equality.

Home Renovation Incentive Scheme

176. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance his plans with regard to a possible extension of the home renovation incentive; the cost-benefit analysis that has been carried out on the scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23254/18]

178. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance his plans to extend the start your own business scheme; the cost-benefit analysis that has been carried out on the scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23256/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 176 and 178 together.

In accordance with the relevant provisions of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997, both the Start Your Own Business and Home Renovation Incentives are due to expire at the end of this year. As with all such time limited incentives, I will consider the possibility of their extension in the context of my preparations for the forthcoming Finance Bill. As part of that work, my

officials are carrying out appropriate ex-post evaluation of these incentives having regard to the criteria set out in my Department's Tax Expenditure Guidelines.

Deposit Interest Rates

177. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the estimated additional fiscal space that would accrue if the planned reductions to DIRT did not proceed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23255/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Budget 2017 introduced a measure to reduce the rate of Deposit Interest Retention Tax (DIRT) over a 4 year period to reach 33 per cent by 2020. Accordingly, as part of the phased introduction of this policy, the planned reduction in the DIRT rate by 2 per cent in 2019 is estimated to represent a negative discretionary revenue measure of €6.4 million next year. A further reduction of 2 per cent is planned in 2020, and is estimated to also cost an additional €6.4 million.

Question No. 178 answered with Question No. 176.

Question No. 179 answered with Question No. 174.

Tax Reliefs Eligibility

180. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the reason the payment of professional subscriptions by employees in circumstances in which they are not reimbursed by their employer do not attract tax relief; the estimated cost of implementing such a measure; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23278/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Since 2011, professional membership fees are only deductible under section 114 of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997 where they are incurred wholly, exclusively and necessarily by an individual in the performance of the duties of his or her employment. In the context of professional fees, this generally means where:

- the duties of his or her employment necessitate that the employee is a member of a professional body, or holds a practicing certificate or licence, and
- the employee cannot exercise those duties without that membership or certificate

Where such fees are not reimbursed by the employer then the employee concerned can claim the appropriate tax relief. Further guidance, including a series of examples of where the relief applies, is available on www.revenue.ie/en/tax-professionals/tm/income-tax-capital-gains-tax-corporation-tax/part-05/05-02-18.pdf.

I consider the current position to be a reasonable one. I am further advised by Revenue that the information from tax returns and other sources available to it does not provide a basis for estimating the cost of extending this measure to include all professional subscriptions paid by employees.

Departmental Contracts

181. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Finance 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 Finance(Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I can advise the Deputy that there are no contracts between my Department and the firm ‘Capita’. There are formal procedures and processes in place within my Department for the procurement of goods or services. It is Departmental policy that procurements undertaken are carried out in conformity with these procedures, policies of the Office of Government Procurement, and relevant legislation.

Of the seventeen Bodies under the aegis of my Department, I am informed that sixteen do not hold any contracts with a company named Capita. The remaining body, the National Treasury Management Agency (NTMA), has contracts in place with a company named Capita, relating to Purchase to Pay ICT system (Software Supply and Installation, and Support and Maintenance) and Staff Expenses ICT system (Software Supply and Installation, and Support & Maintenance). In both cases, Capita was appointed as the successful tenderer following the conclusion of open tender competitions. The contracts awarded are still within the period for which they were originally procured.

Departmental Contracts Data

182. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Finance 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; if contingency plans are in place if the company were to collapse; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21666/18]

Minister for Finance(Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I can advise the Deputy that there are no contracts between my Department and the firm ‘Capita’.

Of the seventeen Bodies under the aegis of my Department, I am informed that sixteen do not have any contracts with a company named Capita. The remaining body, the National Treasury Management Agency (NTMA), holds four contracts with a company named Capita, two relating to Purchase to Pay ICT system (Software Supply and Installation, and Support & Maintenance) and two relating to Staff Expenses ICT system (Software Supply and Installation, and Support and Maintenance). The NTMA acquired the licenses and the systems are operational on NTMA infrastructure and therefore, the NTMA has no key ongoing dependency on Capita.

Real Estate Investment Trusts

183. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance his plans to ensure real estate investment trusts, REITs, do not charge excessive rent given their preferential tax treatment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23316/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs) are collective investment vehicles designed to hold rental investment properties in a tax neutral manner. They are focused on long-term holding of income-producing property as opposed to short term speculative gains.

The function of the REIT framework is not to provide an overall tax exemption, but rather to facilitate collective investment in rental property by providing the same after-tax returns to

investors as direct investment in rental property and removing a double layer of taxation at corporate and shareholder level which would otherwise apply.

The issue with price inflation in the private rental market is the same as that in the market more generally – lack of supply. In fact, lack of supply in the private rental market is more acute than in the owner occupier sector. Recent reports from industry participants show that there are record low levels of properties available to rent. Such scarcity is naturally driving up the market rent.

As a response to unsustainable rent increases the Government has introduced Rent Pressure Zones (RPZs). RPZs have their legal basis under the Residential Tenancies Acts 2004-2016. The Rent Predictability Measure under section 19(4) of the Acts, which limits annual rent increases to 4%, applies to every dwelling in an area designated as an RPZ, irrespective of whether the dwelling is owned by a REIT or a private individual, subject to limited exemptions under section 19(5).

57% of all tenancies are now in a designated RPZ giving full rent certainty to tenants. These measures are starting to have a positive impact. According to the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB) in Q4 2017 rents in Dublin increased at their lowest rate since 2013.

However, the only way to permanently tackle high rent inflation is to increase supply. That is why Government policy is focused on increasing investment in both the owner occupier and private rental sectors.

Question No. 184 answered with Question No. 172.

Tax Code

185. **Deputy Mick Barry** asked the Minister for Finance the position regarding a scenario (details supplied). [23363/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am advised by Revenue that Sections 1017 and 1018 of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997 provide for married couples and couples in a civil partnership to be jointly assessed for tax purposes. As the persons concerned are not married or in a civil partnership, the applicable tax credits and rate bands are not available to them.

The basis for the current tax treatment of married couples derives from the Supreme Court decision in *Murphy vs. Attorney General* (1980) This decision was based on Article 41.3.1 of the Constitution where the State pledges to protect the institution of marriage. The decision held that it was contrary to the Constitution for a married couple, both of whom are working, to pay more tax than two single people living together and having the same income.

The treatment of cohabiting couples for the purposes of social welfare is primarily a matter for my colleague, the Minister for Employment Affairs & Social Protection, Ms. Regina Doherty TD.

Question No. 186 answered with Question No. 151.

Tax Code

187. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the number of pregnant

women in 2017 that were in receipt of a company car while on maternity leave, thus incurring a benefit-in-kind tax charge; the benefit-in-kind rules involving pregnant women in receipt of a company car while they are on maternity leave; if there is an allowance to cater for the fact that a pregnant mother's business travel is likely to reduce significantly thus increasing the benefit-in-kind rate from 6% to 12% and to 24%; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23424/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am advised by Revenue that the information from tax returns and other sources available to Revenue does not provide a basis to establish the number of pregnant women in 2017 that were in receipt of a company car while on maternity leave, thus incurring a benefit in kind tax charge.

I am advised by Revenue that section 121 Taxes Consolidation Act 1997 provides that an employee is chargeable to tax on the benefit arising where, by reason of his or her employment, a car is made available (without a transfer of ownership) to him or her and the car is, in the tax year, available either for that individual's private use or to his or her family or household.

The taxable benefit is calculated based on the cash equivalent of the use of the car. This cash equivalent is calculated as a percentage of the original market value of the car. The percentage applied varies according to the distance over which the car is used for business purposes as set out in the table below. The original market value of a car is the price which it might reasonably have been expected to fetch if sold in the State singly in a retail sale in the open market, immediately before the date of its first registration.

Business mileage lower limit - Kilometres	Business mileage upper limit - Kilometres	Percentage applied to Original Market Value
0	24,000	30%
24,000	32,000	24%
32,000	40,000	18%
40,000	48,000	12%
48,000 and over	-	6%

There is no provision for a reduction in business travel due to absence from work such as maternity leave or illness, as the employee retains the private use of the company car. However, if the car is relinquished during the period of absence, a relief known as tapering relief may apply.

Tapering relief operates where a car is available for only part of the tax year. In such cases the cash equivalent for that year is adjusted in the same proportion as that part of the year bears to the full year. Cases where a car is made available to an employee for the first time during the tax year (e.g. on taking up employment) or a car is no longer available to the employee during the tax year (e.g. due to cessation of employment) are examples of when this apportionment can apply. In addition, the business kilometres may be "annualised" for the purpose of determining the percentage charge to be applied in the calculation of the cash equivalent of the benefit of the car. The following formula may be applied to determine the annualised business kilometres:

$A \times B$

C

Where:

A = Actual business kilometres

B = Full Year (in days)

C = Part of Year (in days) for which car is available

Comprehensive guidance regarding the tax treatment of a company car is available in *Tax and Duty Manual 05-04-02*.

Tax Code

188. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance further to Parliamentary Question No. 77 of 1 May 2017, the date the Revenue Commissioners provided guidance to banks on certain benefit-in-kind issues relating to staff and ex-staff of banks here; if he will provide a copy of the advice given to the banks; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23429/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am advised by Revenue that all banks are assigned to the Financial Services (Banking) District in Revenue's Large Cases Division (LCD).

As I stated in the response to Parliamentary Question No. 77 of 1 May 2017, the legislation concerned, namely, section 122(3) of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997 (TCA) provides that where a loan is made by an employer to an employee and the loan, or any interest due on that loan, is written off, in whole or in part, then the amount written off is treated as a taxable benefit in the hands of the employee (or former employee where the employee has left the employment). It is the responsibility of the employer, to identify any benefits to staff to which section 122(3) TCA applies and to compute and pay the tax liability.

I am advised by Revenue that it has provided clarification to banks that section 122(3) TCA applies to all taxpayers, including banks engaged in retail banking that provide loans in the normal course of business. This clarification has been provided on request or discussed at routine meetings held between LCD and the bank. The matter was first discussed with banks during 2013 and guidance provided on the application of section 122(3) at that time.

A number of banks that provide loans to staff and provide loans to third party retail customers have made LCD aware that, in their view, there are cases where the loans to staff may have been advanced on the same terms as to third party customers and that any debt forgiveness is also on the same terms as to third party customers. In these cases, provided that the bank can demonstrate to Revenue's satisfaction that this is the case then Revenue will review the application of section 122(3). Banks which have advanced this view have been requested to provide documentation on a case by case basis to support their view.

The guidance provided by Revenue to banks is as outlined in the response provided to Parliamentary Question No. 77. If the employee or former employee has only preferential loans from the bank then section 122(3) TCA 1997 applies to give rise to a tax liability on the full amount written off by the bank. If there are a number of loans, including preferential loans, then, regardless of the order of the write off, the amount written off has to be first set against the amount of any preferential loan(s) outstanding and any tax liability arising on the preferential loan(s), so treated as written off first, has to be paid in accordance with section 122(3) TCA 1997.

Tax Data

189. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Finance the number of persons that availed of the special assignee relief programme, SARP, per annum. [23430/18]

190. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Finance his plans to review the special assignee relief programme, SARP; and his further plans to allow the partner of those that qualify for SARP to work. [23431/18]

191. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Finance the way in which the special assignee relief programme, SARP, compares internationally; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23432/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 189 to 191, inclusive, together.

The table sets out the number of claimants for the Special Assignee Relief Programme (SARP) for each of the years 2012 to 2015, the most recent year for which figures are available:

Year	Claimants
2012	11
2013	121
2014	302
2015	586

I am advised by Revenue that its SARP report for 2016 is likely to be published in June.

As the Deputy may be aware, my Department formally reviewed SARP in 2014. That report can be found at: http://www.budget.gov.ie/Budgets/2015/Documents/Report_on_SARP_final.pdf.

On foot of the review, SARP was extended to include assignees arriving in the country up to and including 2020. However, as with all such time limited incentives, my Department keeps SARP under review at all times.

In addition, as part of the review, a comparison was undertaken of SARP with similar schemes in France, the Netherlands and Switzerland. The findings of that comparison can be found at pages 18 to 20 of the review.

Finally, the eligibility of non-EU/EEA citizens to work in Ireland is a matter in the first instance for the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation.

As the Deputy will be aware, those partners of SARP recipients who are citizens of the EU/EEA can in any case avail of the free movement of labour provisions in European law.

Tax Data

192. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Finance the number of claims made under section 285A of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997, as enacted by section 46 of the Finance Act 2008; the cost for wind turbines, CHP, cooling equipment, solar, heat pumps and so on; the annual cost; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23479/18]

193. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Finance the cost of the three largest claims made under section 285A of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997 as enacted by section 46 of the Finance Act 2008; the type of projects to which they applied; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23480/18]

194. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Finance if a cost-benefit analysis has been prepared of the relief provided under section 285A of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997 as enacted by section 46 of the Finance Act 2008; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23481/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 192 to 194, inclusive, together.

A review of the Accelerated Capital Allowances scheme for Energy Efficient Equipment was undertaken by my Department in 2017, ahead of Budget 2018. This scheme is regularly reviewed, in line with the Department of Finance's 2014 Tax Expenditure Guidelines. The 2017 review of the scheme is available at the following link: http://www.budget.gov.ie/Budgets/2018/Documents/ACA_Scheme_for_EEE_Review.pdf.

I am advised by Revenue that the information on tax returns is not captured in such a way as to provide the breakdown by category of equipment as requested. Nonetheless, the overall cost and number of taxpayers availing of the scheme is as follows:

Year	Tax Rebate €m	No. of Claims	Investment in qualifying ACA equipment €m
2009	1.6	93	13.4
2010	0.6	68	5
2011	1.3	76	11.3
2012	1	77	8
2013	0.7	65	5.6
2014	0.9	57	7.2
2015	1.1	65	9

Information concerning the overall numbers claiming and tax cost are available at: <https://www.revenue.ie/en/corporate/documents/statistics/tax-expenditures/costs-tax-expenditures.pdf>, under the heading 'Capital Allowances Used (Energy Efficient Capital Allowance only)'.

Due to the obligation on Revenue to protect the confidentiality of taxpayer information, and the small number of taxpayers involved, information on the three largest claims cannot be provided.

VAT Yield

195. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Finance the amount of VAT received by the Revenue Commissioners in respect of electronic services provided to unregistered customers resident in all other European Union states in each of the months January to April 2018; the amount remitted to those states; the balance retained by Ireland; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23482/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): On 1 January 2015 new EU VAT rules came into effect changing the place where VAT is chargeable in respect of all supplies of telecommunications, broadcasting and electronic (TBE) services to consumers. VAT on these services is now chargeable where the consumer is located instead of where the supplier is located.

As a result of the change, EU and non-EU businesses are required to register and account for VAT in every Member State in which they supply TBE services to consumers or, alternatively,

to avail of the optional special scheme known as the Mini One Stop Shop (MOSS) where they do not have a fixed establishment in an EU Member State.

MOSS is a simplification scheme that allows a business engaged in TBE supplies to register in a single Member State, to file a single quarterly return and pay its VAT liability for all Member States through a web portal in the Member State of registration. This enables suppliers to avoid having to register and account for VAT in all the Member States to which they make TBE supplies.

Transitional rules for the period 2015-2018 provide that the Member State of registration may retain a percentage of the VAT collected for other Member States, with the retention percentage being 30% in 2015 and 2016 and 15% for 2017 and 2018. Therefore the final retention fee payment in respect to VAT retained by Ireland from VAT revenues collected in respect of supplies to other Member States through the MOSS system for 2018 will be received in Quarter 1 2019.

I am informed by Revenue that VAT MOSS returns and payments are received on a quarterly basis, in the month following the period where the liability arises. Payments are subsequently submitted to and received from Member States by the 10th of the following month. The table below provides an overview of the VAT collected, amount retained and the VAT remitted to each Member State from the period 1 January 2018 to 31 March 2018. Information for April 2018 will be included in the second quarterly return for 2018, which is due in August 2018.

Small variations may be observed between the actual sums collected, retained and remitted due to rounding. It should also be noted that these values are provisional and may be subject to future revision.

Payments from Ireland to Other Member States (Quarter 1 2018) (€ million)

Country	Non-Union	Union	Grand Total	Amount Re- tained by Ire- land
AUSTRIA	€0.29	€6.26	€6.55	€1.10
BELGIUM	€0.31	€8.01	€8.32	€1.41
BULGARIA	€0.04	€0.54	€0.59	€0.10
CYPRUS	€0.03	€0.32	€0.35	€0.06
CZECH RE- PUBLIC	€0.14	€2.38	€2.53	€0.43
GERMANY	€3.71	€56.35	€60.06	€10.34
DENMARK	€0.35	€12.09	€12.44	€2.13
ESTONIA	€0.02	€0.39	€0.42	€0.07
GREECE	€0.08	€2.13	€2.21	€0.38
SPAIN	€0.72	€14.22	€14.94	€2.51
FINLAND	€0.21	€3.95	€4.16	€0.70
FRANCE	€1.50	€45.89	€47.39	€8.10
UNITED KINGDOM	€5.48	€101.24	€106.71	€17.87
CROATIA	€0.04	€0.56	€0.60	€0.10
HUNGARY	€0.18	€1.85	€2.02	€0.33
ITALY	€0.61	€19.33	€19.95	€3.41
LITHUANIA	€0.02	€0.40	€0.41	€0.07

Country	Non-Union	Union	Grand Total	Amount Re- tained by Ire- land
LUXEM- BOURG	€0.03	€0.81	€0.84	€0.14
LATVIA	€0.03	€0.38	€0.41	€0.07
MALTA	€0.02	€0.24	€0.25	€0.04
NETHER- LANDS	€0.62	€14.25	€14.87	€2.51
POLAND	€0.23	€4.14	€4.37	€0.73
PORTUGAL	€0.10	€2.18	€2.29	€0.39
ROMANIA	€0.11	€1.39	€1.50	€0.24
SWEDEN	€0.49	€16.12	€16.61	€2.85
SLOVENIA	€0.03	€0.35	€0.38	€0.06
SLOVAKIA	€0.07	€0.79	€0.86	€0.14
Grand Total	€15.47	€316.55	€332.02	€56.27

VAT Yield

196. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Finance the amount of VAT at point of entry collected in each of the months January to April 2018; the amounts collected in the corresponding months in 2016 and 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23483/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am advised by Revenue that the amount of VAT collected at point of entry in each of the months January to April 2018 is provided in the table below. The value provided is the gross VAT collected and as such does not account for any VAT refunds that are subsequently repaid (through the VAT3 return). The figures provided are provisional and as such may be subject to future revisions.

Year	2016	2017	2018
Month			
January	€110.53m	€142.10m	€110.24m
February	€98.23m	€144.02m	€128.58m
March	€100.57m	€128.59m	€128.49m
April	€104.57m	€131.20m	€106.05m

Revenue Commissioners Reports

197. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Finance if he will request the Revenue Commissioners to publish an annual analysis of tax at risk, including, but not limited to, the number and amount of tax in dispute under correlative adjustment mutual agreement procedures, MAPs, tax appeals and so on, to be included in the office's annual report; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23484/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As the Deputy is aware Revenue publish comprehensive analysis and statistics in conjunction with the Annual Report. I know that Revenue is committed to publishing data to facilitate public debate subject to the constraints of taxpayer confidentiality.

I am advised by Revenue that at 31 March 2018 there were 30 open Mutual Agreement Procedure ('MAP') cases and 39 open correlative relief cases which relate to adjustments raised by tax authorities in Tax Treaty partner countries in respect of transfer-pricing or the attribution of profits to permanent establishments.

MAP cases involve bilateral negotiations with tax authorities in other jurisdictions while correlative relief cases are dealt with on a unilateral basis. Some of the MAP cases are at an early stage and Revenue has not yet received sufficient information to estimate the potential Irish tax relief that could result from closing the cases.

For those MAP cases where the potential relief is known, the maximum aggregate tax value of the relief could amount to €250m. The maximum aggregate tax value of the correlative relief adjustments could amount to €251m.

While the aggregate values are based on granting relief for the full foreign adjustments, the total relief ultimately granted in MAP cases is likely to be less, as a result of the withdrawal or reduction of the foreign adjustments concerned on the conclusion of the MAP negotiations. Similarly, for correlative relief cases, the total relief ultimately granted is likely to be less following technical reviews of the claims by Revenue.

In regard to appeals, the Tax Appeals Commission (TAC) is an independent statutory body responsible for receiving, processing, adjudicating and determining appeals. As the TAC is now the competent body for the management of appeals, I consider that it is appropriate that it be the primary source for appeals statistics.

While Revenue maintains statistics on appeals, for various reasons these will not necessarily correspond with those provided by the TAC. For example, there may be time lags in the notification of new appeals by the TAC to Revenue and also time lags in the closure of appeals by the TAC following settlement of an appeal by agreement between Revenue and the appellant.

Tax Data

198. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Finance the number of companies opting to be treated under section 110 of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997 which have failed to submit accounts to the Revenue Commissioners and have been prosecuted for failing to do so in each of the years 2012 to 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23485/18]

199. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Finance the number of meetings between the Revenue Commissioners and the Office of Corporate Enforcement regarding the substantial number of companies opting to be taxed under section 110 of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997 which have failed to submit accounts to either the Revenue Commissioners or the Company Registration Office; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23486/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 198 and 199 together.

I am advised by Revenue that the number of companies that have notified Revenue that they are "qualifying companies" for the purposes of section 110 Taxes Consolidation Act (TCA), 1997 and have not submitted Financial Statements by 28 May 2018 is set out in the table:

Year	Number of Corporation Tax returns filed	Financial Statements not filed	%
2016	2,347	78	3.32%
2015	2,145	29	1.35%
2014	1,891	164	8.67%

Section 884 of the TCA 1997 was amended by Finance Act 2012 to extend the definition of a Corporation Tax return to encompass financial statements. This, coupled with the existing e-filing legislation, establishes a statutory basis for the mandatory submission of Financial Statements as part of the tax return. Failure to submit the Financial Statements as part of the return results in the filing of an incorrect return.

The obligation to file Financial Statements applied to section 110 companies for accounting periods ending on, or after, 31 July 2013. Typically, section 110s companies have a 31 December year end and, for those companies, the first returns impacted were due to be filed no later than September 2014.

I am advised by Revenue that section 110 companies are often used for a specific transaction or set of transactions and tend to be liquidated once the transaction or set of transactions is complete. Companies in liquidation may not be required to file financial statements. Further information is available at Revenue.ie (www.revenue.ie/en/online-services/support/documents/ixbrl/ixbrl-faqs.pdf).

There have been no criminal prosecutions of section 110 companies for failure to file Financial Statement. I am advised by Revenue that generally speaking the sanction that is applied in such circumstances is the imposition of a surcharge for the late or non-filing of a tax return, including Financial Statements under section 1084 TCA 1997. As at 28 May 2018 surcharges for late filing of Financial Statements have been applied to the following number of cases:

Year (Corporation Tax return filed)	Cases with Surcharge
2016	46
2015	62
2014	59

I am advised by Revenue that its responsibilities in this area relate to ensuring compliance with the conditions set out in section 110 of the Taxes Consolidation Act (TCA) 1997 and overall tax and duty compliance. I am advised by Revenue that there have been no meetings with the Office of the Director of Corporate Enforcement in this regard.

Employment Investment Incentive Scheme

200. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Finance the timeframe for small business to be approved by the Revenue Commissioners for the employment and investment incentive, EII, scheme; if an application for a company (details supplied) in County Longford can be expedited; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23595/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Employment and Investment Incentive (“EII”) is a tax incentive whereby individuals who invest in certain qualifying companies obtain tax relief on the amount invested.

A qualifying company is one which:

- is an unquoted SME, meaning it has less than 250 employees and has an annual turnover of up to €50 million or an annual balance sheet total of up to €43 million;

- carries on certain trading activities or Research and Development activities;

- when its first EII investment is raised, the company (including any companies under the control of the same people) has been trading for less than 7 years or, if the company has been trading for more than 7 years, the EII investment is required to enter a new market and the amount of the EII investment required is greater than 50% of the company's average annual turnover for the preceding 5 years; and

- foresaw any second or subsequent follow-on EII investments in the business plan the company used to raise its first EII investment.

All shares issued by the company must also be fully paid up, at all times. Shares should not be issued in advance of the moneys actually being paid over to the company.

I am advised by Revenue that all claims are processed in the order received. The company to which the deputy refers applied for outline approval on 24 August 2017 and received the approval on 4 December 2017. The company issued the shares in December 2017 and applied for relief on 1 May 2018. Revenue further advise me that application for relief will be dealt with when it reaches correspondence of that date; and that there is currently a backlog of claims with 150 applications waiting to be finalised in advance of the company's, with at least one request for additional information sent to 60% of these applicants. Depending on the complexity of the application, applications for relief are generally taking between 3 and 6 months to finalise.

The entitlement to relief under EII is determined on the date the shares are issued to a qualifying investor, and they must be fully paid up shares on that date. As the company has already issued shares, any delay in approving that relief does not disadvantage the company with respect to raising funds. There is no tax deadline for investors fast approaching in respect of which approval for EII is a key factor. Investors who made an investment will, if the relief is approved, be entitled to claim the relief when they file their tax return on 31 October 2018.

Finally, as the Deputy will be aware, I announced that a review of EII and Start-Up Relief for Entrepreneurs is to be carried out this year to ensure that they operate as competitive, efficient and effective measures in accordance with state aid rules and my department's tax expenditure guidelines. That review is now underway and is being conducted by Indecon Economic Consultants. Amongst other matters, it will consider operational aspects of the scheme.

Insurance Industry Regulation

201. **Deputy Eugene Murphy** asked the Minister for Finance if the case of a person (details supplied) who has to pay 27% of the amount of their car insurance premium on top of the quotation due to the fact the person wishes to pay by direct debit will be investigated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23608/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): At the outset, it is important to say that the circumstances in which the additional charge referred to in this question may arise are not clear from the question. The European Union (Payment Services) Regulations 2018, which transposed the revised Payment Services Directive, prohibit a payee from requesting an additional charge from a consumer for using a SEPA direct debit. However, it is possible to apply other charges; for example an administrative fee, a service fee, or a fee where payment is made by instalments.

The Deputy should also note that as Minister for Finance, I am responsible for the development of the legal framework governing financial regulation. Neither I nor the Central Bank of Ireland can interfere in the provision or pricing of insurance products, as these matters are of a commercial nature, and are determined by insurance companies based on an assessment of the risks they are willing to accept. This position is reinforced by the EU framework for insurance which expressly prohibits Member States from adopting rules which require insurance companies to obtain prior approval of the pricing or terms and conditions of insurance products. Consequently, neither I nor the Bank are in a position to direct insurance companies as to the pricing level or terms or conditions that they should apply in individual cases.

However, the Central Bank is responsible for ensuring compliance with the Consumer Protection Code 2012 (the Code). In relation to charges, the Code requires that a regulated entity in all its dealings with customers and within the context of its authorisation, makes full disclosure of all relevant material information, including all charges, in a way that seeks to inform the customer (Provision 2.6). In addition, prior to providing a product or service to a consumer, a regulated entity must provide the consumer, on paper or on another durable medium, with a breakdown of all charges, including third party charges, which will be passed on to the consumer (Provision 4.54 (a)).

Where a consumer is not satisfied with the level of charges being applied under the terms and conditions of the contract with an individual regulated entity, he/she should consider shopping around for alternative cover.

If someone has a complaint about a regulated financial institution, they should first discuss it with the financial institution concerned. Under the Central Bank's Consumer Protection Code, all regulated financial services firms must have a complaints handling procedure in place.

Where a person has exhausted the complaints handling process in the institution and is not satisfied with the response, he/she has the right to refer the complaint to the Financial Services and Pensions Ombudsman (FSPO), which is a statutory independent body.

More information on this complaints process is available on the Central Bank's website at: <https://www.centralbank.ie/contact-us/make-a-complaint>.

Fiscal Policy

202. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Finance if he will report on the programme for partnership Government commitment on the rainy day fund; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23440/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am pleased to say that I secured Government agreement to the drafting of a Rainy Day Fund Bill last week, in parallel with committee scrutiny of my policy proposals. This legislation will provide the essential legislative underpinning for the Rainy Day Fund and allow us to fulfill the commitment in the Programme for a Partnership Government.

We have made enormous progress in recent years in stabilising the public finances and putting them on a sustainable footing. Establishing the Fund is a prudent and forward-looking measure, and I am confident that it will help us increase the resilience of the Irish economy to external economic shocks.

Tax Reliefs Abolition

203. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Finance his views on reinstating tax relief on union subscriptions. [23631/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): A review of the appropriate treatment for tax purposes of trade union subscriptions and professional body fees was carried out by my Department in 2016 and included in the 2016 report on tax expenditures published on budget day 2016. The review may be found at the following link:

(http://www.budget.gov.ie/Budgets/2017/Documents/Tax_Expenditures_Report%202016_final.pdf).

The review concluded that:

“...analysis of the scheme using the principles laid down by the Department’s Tax Expenditure Guidelines shows that it fails to reach the evaluation threshold to warrant introduction in this manner.

The reinstatement of this tax relief would have no justifiable policy rationale and does not express a defined policy objective. Given that individuals join trade unions largely for the well-known benefits of membership, and the potential value of the relief to an individual would equate to just over €1 per week, this scheme would have little to no incentive effect on the numbers choosing to join. There is no specific market failure that needs to be addressed by such a scheme, and it would consist largely of deadweight.”

Given the conclusions of the review, I have no plans to reintroduce such a relief.

Insurance Data

204. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the number of insurance companies operating here with a licence from the Central Bank to provide insurance policies that are not members of an organisation (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23670/18]

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

However, in order to provide as relevant a response as possible to the PQ, my officials contacted the Central Bank of Ireland to establish the number of insurers who are authorised to operate in the Irish market. They also contacted Insurance Ireland to find out the number of insurers that are members of their organisation

As the Deputy is aware the Central Bank of Ireland is responsible for the prudential supervision of insurance and reinsurance companies authorised in Ireland. It is also responsible for conduct of business of firms operating on a freedom of services basis. In this regard, it publishes Registers of firms authorised to provide insurance and reinsurance in Ireland. At present, 1,233 firms are authorised to provide Life and Non-Life insurance in Ireland, broken down as follows:

Number	Name
58	Solvency II Undertakings authorised under the European Union (Insurance and Reinsurance) Regulations 2015 (S.I. No. 485 of 2015), to carry on Life Insurance business
171	List of Undertakings which have notified of their intention or obtained an administrative authorisation to carry on Life Insurance business into Ireland, on a Freedom of Services basis
128	Solvency II Undertakings authorised under the European Union (Insurance and Reinsurance) Regulations 2015 (S.I. No. 485 of 2015), to carry on Non-Life Insurance business.
813	List of Undertakings which have notified of their intention or obtained an administrative authorisation to carry on Non-Life Insurance business into Ireland, on a Freedom of Services basis.
63	Undertakings are authorised to carry on reinsurance business.

It is important to note that while 1,223 companies are authorised to provide life and non-life insurance, many may not be currently active in the Irish market.

Insurance Ireland is an insurance representative body. In relation to motor insurance, Insurance Ireland members represent 90% of the Irish motor market. Insurance Ireland confirmed that they have 130 members in their directory as of 25 May 2018. The following is a sectoral breakdown of members and associate members:

Number	Name
15	Life Members
28	International Members
18	Non-Life Members
3	Health Members
29	Associate Members
37	Reinsurance and Captives

In addition, I understand Insurance Ireland have a number of InsurTech Members and Strategic Alliance Partners. Further information on membership is available in Insurance Ireland 2017 Annual Report, available at <http://www.insuranceireland.eu/media/Annual-report-2017-FINAL%20AW%20digital.pdf>.

Property Tax Data

205. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the estimated cost to the Exchequer if the local property tax was abolished, ignoring all adjustments made at county level, that is, if all counties charged an unadjusted rate; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23696/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am informed by Revenue that Local Property Tax (LPT) collection in 2018 is projected to be approximately €470m. This includes variations from the central rate by Local Authorities under the Local Adjustment Factor (LAF). LAF decisions for 2018 are included in Revenue's LPT Statistics for 2018 available at: <https://www.revenue.ie/en/corporate/information-about-revenue/statistics/local-property-tax/quarterly-reports-2018/local-property-tax-april-2018.aspx>.

Adjusting this forecast to assume that all Local Authorities set their LAF to match the central rate, it is tentatively estimated the yield from LPT would be €500m. This would represent the notional loss to the Exchequer under the scenario outlined by the Deputy.

Motor Insurance Costs

206. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Finance if he will report on the progress and steps taken by him and the motor insurance working group to ensure drivers will see significant motor insurance premium reductions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23707/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Deputy should note that as Minister for Finance, I am responsible for the development of the legal framework governing financial regulation. Neither I nor the Central Bank can interfere in the pricing of insurance products, as these matters are of a commercial nature, and are determined by insurance companies based on the risks they are willing to accept.

However, it is acknowledged that pricing in the motor insurance sector has been subject to a lot of volatility in recent years and, indeed, the problem of rising motor insurance premiums was the main impetus for the establishment of the Cost of Insurance Working Group. Its Report on the Cost of Motor Insurance was published in January 2017. The Report makes 33 recommendations with 71 associated actions to be carried out in agreed timeframes, set out within an Action Plan.

Work is ongoing on the implementation of the recommendations by the relevant Government Departments and Agencies and there is a commitment within the Report that the Working Group will prepare quarterly updates on its progress. The fifth such update was published on 11 May and shows that of the 50 separate deadlines set to date within the Action Plan, 40 have been met. Substantial work has also been undertaken in respect of the nine action points categorised as "ongoing".

It should be noted that the most recent CSO data (for April 2018) indicates that private motor insurance premiums have decreased by 19% since peaking in July 2016. While the CSO statistics indicate a greater degree of stability on an overall basis, these figures represent a broad average and therefore I appreciate many people may still be seeing increases. However, I am hopeful that the improved stability in pricing will be maintained and that premiums should continue to fall from the very high levels of mid-2016.

Finally, I would recommend drivers who are seeking or renewing insurance to consult the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission website, which has an informative section regarding the purchase of car insurance generally. One of the key tips listed to help cut costs is to "shop around" and "always get quotes from several insurance providers when you need to get or renew insurance".

Motor Insurance Regulation

207. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Finance the steps he is taking to ensure insurance companies inform consumers of the specific reason or reasons their premium has increased; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23708/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As the Deputy may be aware, in fulfilment of Recommendation 1 from the Report on the Cost of Motor Insurance, a protocol was agreed between Insurance Ireland and my Department which provides a list of reasons for large increases in motor insurance premiums. The content of the agreed document is available on the websites and the social media channels of the major motor insurance providers, and will also be provided to policyholders on renewal.

My Department is satisfied that the information being provided to policyholders fulfils the essence of the recommendation without a need for legislation to underpin it as had been originally stipulated in Action Point 2, which was formulated at a stage when it was envisaged that the document provided to policyholders would be bespoke in nature. It does not consider that it is necessary at this juncture to pursue legislation in respect of the non-bespoke protocol which has been agreed through non-legislative means, but will continue to monitor how the protocol is functioning in practice.

In an ideal world, a strong case can be made that policyholders should be furnished with the specific reason or reasons for an increase in their insurance premium. However, the main reason why such a bespoke document cannot be provided is because my Department has been advised that the complexity of the interaction between the customer-facing systems and the underwriting systems in all modern insurance companies would make it very difficult to delineate specific reasons for an individual premium increase. If insurers were to try and link these systems in order to address this issue, it would require very significant IT infrastructural changes at considerable cost, which would almost certainly in turn lead to higher premiums. In addition, the Cost of Insurance Working Group believes that such an onerous requirement could result in the unintended consequence of discouraging new entrants to the market. Nevertheless, as part of the protocol consumers will be provided with contact details of their insurance provider in order to enable them to receive more “tailored” information if they do not believe any of the listed reasons apply to their situation.

I am keen to improve the level of information provided to policyholders by seeking to have the previous year’s premium included in renewal documentation. My Department has discussed this matter with Insurance Ireland. It also requested that this information be included in renewal documentation by means of a submission to a consultation which was undertaken by the Central Bank of Ireland – Consultation Paper 114: “Amendments to the Non-Life Insurance (Provision of Information) (Renewal of Policy of Insurance) Regulations 2007 (S.I. No. 74 of 2007)” – which is pursuant to Recommendations 2 and 3 from the Motor Report, and continues to engage with the Central Bank accordingly.

This is an issue which I will continue to keep under review.

Motor Insurance Claims

208. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Finance if he will report on the progress made to date in the establishment of a national claims information database; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23709/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The development of the National Claims Information Database is a complex project as insurers very often record data in different ways and do not necessarily use the same definitions.

For this reason, my officials established a data sub-group in 2017, which has been meeting since then to examine the issues regarding its development and to prepare the General Scheme of the legislation required. At the end of 2017, it completed its work on the development of this Scheme and on 19 December 2017, the Government approved the General Scheme of the Central Bank (National Claims Information Database) Bill.

The Bill is included in the Government Legislative Programme on the list of Priority Legislation for publication this session. The Joint Oireachtas Committee on Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform and the Taoiseach indicated to me in February that it would not be conducting pre-legislative scrutiny on the Bill.

The Office of the Parliamentary Counsel assigned a drafter to the Bill on 26 January 2018 and officials in the Department of Finance are currently working with the drafter to finalise a draft of the Bill as soon as possible. I understand that good progress has been made and I am hopeful that a Bill will be published before the end of this legislative Session.

I also launched a public consultation on the General Scheme which concluded in March and the responses received were published on my Departments website: <http://www.finance.gov.ie/updates/responses-to-central-bank-national-claims-information-database-bill-2017-consultation/>. A number of responses were received from industry and business groups. My officials have been reviewing the content of these responses as they relate to the drafting of the Bill. As part of the process of finalising the Bill, the Department is assessing the responses with regard to the validity of the concerns expressed against the overall policy aim of the legislation. On the basis of its review of the responses to date, the Department does not anticipate that substantive amendments will be required at this stage and therefore it is not anticipated to give rise to any delay in the finalisation and publication of the Bill. A consultation will also have to take place with the European Central Bank on the Bill once it is published.

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

To ensure that the Database can be operationalised quickly following the enactment of the legislation, the Central Bank has continued to work in parallel on the technical specification for the Database.

Flood Prevention Measures

209. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if the Office of Public Works plans to introduce a national scheme to protect individual houses from flooding, particularly those that almost flooded in the flooding events of 2015-16; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23148/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran): Individual Property Protection (IPP) can be effective in mitigating against the adverse consequences for properties at risk of flooding. It can reduce the damage caused to contents, furniture and fittings in a house or business, but it is not applicable in all situations. For example, it may not be suitable in areas of deep or prolonged flooding, or for certain types

of properties.

The Interdepartmental Flood Policy Co-ordination Group is considering the potential costs and benefits associated with the introduction of any potential individual property protection (IPP) scheme. The Group is being informed by two different pilot projects in Thomastown and Graiguenamanagh in County Kilkenny and in Crossmolina in County Mayo, which were announced by Government on 26 January, 2016.

These pilots may also inform the potential administrative arrangements for any possible future IPP scheme.

The Co-ordination Group's work, when completed, will be submitted to Government for consideration in the context of the proposals for the introduction by Government of any feasible assistance to support individual property protection measures.

Garda Station Closures

210. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the discussions OPW officials have had with An Garda Síochána regarding the reopening of Garda stations; the projected cost involved in reopening each station based on the specifications supplied by An Garda Síochána; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23192/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran): The Office of Public Works has been requested by An Garda Síochána to progress the reopening of six former Garda Stations. A brief of requirements for each Station was received by the end of February, 2018 and full technical assessments of each Station were completed by end April, 2018. The deliberative process between An Garda Síochána and OPW is continuing. Until detailed and definitive design is agreed in each case, fully costed estimates cannot be provided.

Caiteachas Ranna

211. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Pearse Doherty** den an Aire Caiteachais Phoiblí agus Athchóirithe maidir le Ceist Dála Uimhir 100 i gcomhair freagra scríofa ar 9 Bealtaine 2018, cad chuige nach raibh an méid iomlán den mhaoiniú atá curtha ar fáil don Stát gach bliain ón gCrannchur Náisiúnta nochta sa fhreagra a bhí tugtha; an féidir leis an figiúr sin a thabhairt anois; sna naisc éagsúla a bhí curtha ar fáil sa fhreagra, ar chuir an Crannchur Náisiúnta an t-airgead iomlán ar fáil atá luaite in aice leis na fo-cheannteidil agus páirtchistiú tugtha orthu [23211/18]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Freagraíodh Ceist Dála 100 ar bhonn don tuiscint is fearr atá ag m'oifigh maidir leis an gceist a tugadh.

Maidir le díolacháin do Cheadúnas don Chrannchur Náisiúnta i 2014 fuair an Príomh Crannchur na hÉireann (Premier Lotteries Ireland) réamhíocaíocht do €405m. Mar atá luaite insan freagra ar an 9 Bealtaine, glactar leis an bhfáltais isteach san Stáchtiste chun maoiniú a chur ar fáil do thionscadail caiteachtais gan gá le rátaí cánach a ardú. Aimsíodh na fo-cheannteidil atá ábhartha sna Meastacháin Leasaithe le Sheirbhísí Poiblí 2014 mar 'pháirtchistiú ó idirbheartanna an Crannchur Náisiúnta': <https://www.per.gov.ie/en/publication-of-revised-estimates-for-public-service-2014/>.

Maidir leis an maoiniú atá ag dul ar aghaidh trí dhiolacháin thicéid an Chrannchur Náisiúnta, ba cheart thabhairt faoi ndeara go dtugtar 'Gross Gaming Revenue' ar dhiolacháin thicéid lúide

na duiseanna. De réir an tAcht um Chrannchur Náisiúnta 2013 faoi théarmaí an Céadúnas don Chrannchur Náisiúnta, tá 65% do ‘Gross Gaming Revenue’ aistrithe ón gCiste an Chrannchuir Náisiúnta go dtí an Státchiste chun maoiniú a chur ar fáil do “dea-chúiseanna”. Is iad seo na méideanna atá tugtha ón gCiste an Chrannchuir Náisiúnta go dtí an Státchiste chun maoiniú a thabairt do “dea-chúiseanna” le roinnt blianta.

Year	Amount
2008	€265m
2009	€275m
2010	€250m
2011	€230m
2012	€220m
2013	€210m
2014	€178m
2015	€193m
2016	€219m
2017	€227m

(Tabhair faoi ndeara de bharr amanna na n-aistrithe, is féidir difríocht bheag a bheidh ann idir an méid a ghintear do dea-chúiseanna gach bhliain ar bonn díolacháin thicéid (ina bhfuil cuntais an t-Oibreoir bunaithe) agus an méid a bhí aistrithe go dtí an Státchiste an bhliain sin)

Nuair atá siad aistrithe go dtí an Státchiste, d’éileálfar leis na méideanna go léir mar Vóta caitheachas ginearálta i dtearmaí an próiseas Meastachán, socruithe le maoirseacht agus cuntasacht phoiblí.

Faoi S.41(1) Acht um Chrannchur Náisiúnta 2013, is iad na hearnáil réimsí maoinithe ná:

spórt agus siamsaíocht; cultúir náisiúnta agus oidhreacht (an Ghaeilge san áireamh); na healaíona (laistigh do mhiniú an tAcht Ealaíon 2013); sláinte an phobail; óige, sóisialta agus áiseanna; timpeallacht náisiúnta; agus cuspóirí eile (má tá siad ann) atá ar an Rialtas socrú ó am go ham. Tá gach Roinn freagracht as na cistí a íoc amach.

De réir Aguisín 1 don Meastachán Leasaithe le Sheirbhísí Poiblí tá na fo-cheannteideal atá á páirtmaoiniú ag an gCrannchur Náisiúnta, suim na fo-cheanteidil, agus an méid atá maoinithe ag an gCrannchur Náisiúnta. Insna nasc éagsula i mo fhreagra ar an 9 Bealtaine, tugann an Roinn Cultúir, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta an fíorchostas gach bhliain ar fo-cheanteidil atá páirtchistithe ag an gCrannchur Náisiúnta, le briseadh síos de réir eagraíocht agus suíomh san áireamh. Tá achoimre do Chaitheachais C4 do Scéimeanna Tacaíochta Gaeilge thíos:

Year	Amount
2017	€4,013,980.64
2016	€3,593,588.31
2015	€3,692,219.44
2014	€3,768,259.46
2013	€4,327,081.05

Living Wage

212. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the estimated full year cost of making the public sector a living wage employer with a minimum

hourly wage rate of €11.70 per hour; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23247/18]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I refer the Deputy to PQ 7028/18 answered on 13 February 2018. The position remains unchanged.

Flood Relief Schemes Status

213. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the reason the Buncrana and Luddan scheme, while included in the proposed measures for flood risk management County Donegal summary, is not in fact included in the first batch of schemes yet remains part of the ten year €1 billion programme of investment in flood relief measures; when the scheme will commence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23265/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran): The Flood Risk Management Plans I launched on 3 May 2018 set out the proposed measures to address Ireland's flood risk. The Plans indicate that an additional 118 flood relief schemes are feasible and I announced €1bn investment to deliver these over the coming decade, under the National Development Plans 2018 to 2027. Together with the 75 schemes completed or underway means that the Government's investment in flood relief schemes will protect 95% of properties at assessed risk from flooding.

This is a ten year Programme of investment to protect all properties that have an equal risk from flooding. The Programme has two objectives, nationally to target risk where its impact is greatest and regionally to utilise available capacity between the Office of Public Works and Local Authorities to deliver schemes. On 3 May, I announced €257 million for an initial phase of 50 flood relief projects throughout the country, including the five largest schemes and 31 small or minor projects under €1 million being progressed directly by local authorities. The remaining schemes in the initial tranche provide benefit the greatest number of properties at risk, nationally, selected on a regional basis.

The OPW will continue to monitor progress with all schemes and continue to work closely with the local authorities making use of all available capacity to prioritise and deliver new schemes, including the Buncrana and Luddan scheme, during this ten year programme of investment.

Public Sector Pensions

214. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if a reply will issue to a query raised in correspondence (details supplied) relating to the single public service pension; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23422/18]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): There is no specific provision in the Public Service Pensions (Single Scheme and Other Provisions) Act 2012 which established the Single Scheme, to provide for the augmentation of pension benefits by individual members of the Single Scheme. Notwithstanding this, a commitment has been given that a facility for the purchase and transfer of additional pension benefits by Single Scheme members would be provided by way of Regulations under the Single Scheme Act.

Appropriate Regulations are being drafted and these will set out the rules of the new scheme. Consistent with the structure of the Single Scheme, it is intended that the Regulations will allow Single Scheme members to purchase additional pension and lump sum referable amounts

to augment pension benefits accrued under the Scheme. The Regulations are also expected to provide for the transfer of pension entitlements accrued in certain other Revenue approved pension schemes to the Single Scheme. The pricing of purchased benefits will be based on the actuarially calculated cost of paying out those benefits at retirement and will operate on a cost neutral basis to the Exchequer.

In recent months, there has been an opportunity to devote considerable additional attention to the drafting of the Regulations. The draft scheme is currently subject to detailed legal and other considerations and the intention is to bring forward Regulations on the new scheme as soon as these considerations are complete. I am optimistic that the momentum achieved recently can be maintained to ensure that the Regulations will be finalised in the coming months.

Community Employment Schemes Supervisors

215. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the discussions which have taken place since the Dáil Éireann motion to provide community employment supervisors and assisted community employment scheme supervisors with pension provision; the plans being formulated with a view to dealing with this issue, which has gone on for over a decade; if the high level forum has met to address this issue recently with a view to resolving this issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23600/18]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I would refer the Deputy to my responses to PQ 54985/17 of 16 January 2018, and to PQ 13684/18 of 27 March 2018.

Public Sector Pay

216. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the annual cost over one year of equalising pay amounts for post-2011 entrants to the public service within one year (details supplied). [23611/18]

217. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the annual costs over two years of equalising pay amounts for post-2011 entrants to the public service within one year (details supplied). [23612/18]

218. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the annual costs over two years of equalising pay amounts for post-2011 entrants to the public service within two years (details supplied). [23613/18]

219. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the annual costs over three years of equalising pay amounts for post-2011 entrants to the public service within two years (details supplied). [23614/18]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 216 to 219, inclusive, together.

The Public Service Stability Agreement 2018-2020 (PSSA), provided that an examination of remaining salary scale issues in respect of post January 2011 recruits at entry grades would be undertaken within 12 months of the commencement of the Agreement and on conclusion of this work the parties would discuss and agree how the issues might be addressed under the terms of the PSSA.

Additionally, as the Deputy is aware, this Government accepted an amendment at Section 11 of the Public Service Pay and Pensions Act 2017, that within 3 months of the passing of the Act, I would prepare and lay before the Oireachtas a report on the cost of and a plan in dealing with pay equalisation for new entrants to the public service.

This was a significant body of work and staff resources from within the Irish Government Economic Evaluation Service (IGEES) were assigned to collect, collate and examine the data and provide detailed point in time costs associated with the measure.

In accordance with the legislation I submitted a report to the Oireachtas on the 16th of March. This report estimated the overall cost of a two point incremental adjustment to be in the range of €195m - €200m for over 60,000 staff identified as new entrants.

As detailed in the Report, the costs are annualised and an increment date of 1 January is assumed to give the full one year cost. However, increment dates across the year vary significantly by individual and sector while salary scales and the structure of such scales across the public service as they affect individuals is not consistent. Accordingly the necessary information to furnish the additional information sought by the Deputy regarding phased implementation of a two increment adjustment is not currently available to my Department.

However, in recognition of this, since the publication of the report, my Department, in support of the discussions between the parties, has engaged in further work to assess and model the potential budgetary implications and impacts through phasing of the overall quantum. This work is currently ongoing.

Flood Risk Insurance Cover Provision

220. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the extent of information sharing between the OPW and insurance companies in respect of flood risk; his views on the practice of insurance companies denying flood cover to households at which no flooding has taken place; his plans to address the issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23629/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran): While the Office of Public Works (OPW) has no responsibility for oversight or regulation of the insurance industry in relation to flood risk insurance, or to insurance matters generally, the OPW has a very specific role in the exchange of information with the insurance industry in relation to completed flood defence schemes.

On 24th March 2014, the OPW agreed a Memorandum of Understanding with Insurance Ireland, the representative body for insurance companies in Ireland. This Memorandum of Understanding sets out the principles of how the two organisations work together to ensure that appropriate and relevant information on completed flood relief schemes is provided to insurance companies to facilitate, to the greatest extent possible, the availability of insurance against the risk of flooding.

The Memorandum notes the requirement for insurance companies when assessing exposure to flood risk to take full account of information provided by the OPW on completed flood defence schemes. Under this Memorandum of Understanding, Insurance Ireland provides the OPW with details of the level of policies that include flood risk insurance within the benefitting areas of these schemes.

The initial tranche of data provided by the OPW to Insurance Ireland in 2014 covered twelve

completed flood defence schemes; showing the design, extent and nature of the protections offered by these works. Details of a further five schemes were provided in January 2015 and details of the Waterford Flood Defence Scheme were shared last year.

Since the initial tranche of data provided by the OPW, Insurance Ireland has completed four surveys of its members to assess the level of flood insurance in benefitting areas. The most recent returns highlights that 83% of policies issued for residences and small businesses include flood risk insurance cover, with 90% of policies having flood cover in those areas protected by permanent flood defences.

The Department of Finance has responsibility for Government policy on flood insurance. In late 2016, the Minister for Finance prepared a report on policy options to support flood insurance. This was considered by Government that agreed to continue with its policy of flood insurance cover being returned through Government investment in flood relief schemes.

Under the Memorandum the Department of Finance, Insurance Ireland and my officials meet with the insurance sector quarterly. I am satisfied that in relation to the role of the OPW, my officials will continue to work with Insurance Ireland on this matter to ensure that the insurance industry has the required knowledge with regard to OPW flood defence schemes to facilitate, to the greatest extent possible, the availability of insurance against the risk of flooding.

Office of Public Works

221. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if parkland (details supplied) was disposed of by Dublin City Council to the OPW in 1986; when the disposal will be finalised; if the OPW will clean the area which is to the north west of the national monument; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23679/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran): It is my understanding that the area in question is currently still in the ownership of Dublin City Council and it is therefore a matter for the Council to clean and maintain this area.

Construction Industry

222. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform his plans to establish a construction sector group; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23705/18]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The National Development Plan contains a commitment to establish a Construction Sector Working Group. The purpose of the Group is to ensure regular and open dialogue between Government and the construction sector to support the successful delivery of the NDP on a value-for-money basis for the Exchequer.

It is vital that the Group's remit is clear and speaks to the issues that require dialogue between Government and the sector. To that end, my Department is consulting potential members of the Group in advance of the first formal plenary, to seek their views on issues that might be appropriately addressed in this forum.

Once this round of consultations is complete, I will set out a focused scope and work programme for the Group.

Civil Service Renewal Plan

223. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he and his departmental officials have discussed the retirement cliff for the Civil Service in view of the age profile and the impact of the loss of expertise; and the actions being taken to address the matter. [23444/18]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Taoiseach's Department, are fully cognisant of the changing demographic of the Civil Service. Under their leadership and sponsorship, strategic workforce planning is an action of One Vision - Civil Service Renewal Plan 2014 and the People Strategy 2017-2020 of the Civil Service.

The Management Boards of Civil Service Departments and Offices retain ownership and responsibility for workforce planning of their respective organisations. This business process is an ongoing and dynamic activity, responding to environmental challenges and developments in relation to their strategic business goals.

The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform now has formal responsibility for the development and coordination of strategic workforce planning in the Civil Service by the provision of guidelines, training and support to all government Departments and Offices. At present, officials in the Civil Service HR Division of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, are engaging with Civil Service HR Managers, in preparation for the next round of workforce planning, with a view to developing rolling workforce plans with a 3 year horizon.

The staffing requirements identified in these plans will inform the recruitment strategies of the Public Appointments Service in the context of anticipated retirements.

Identified learning and development interventions, arising from anticipated retirements, are being addressed through OneLearning, the Learning and Development Centre for the Civil Service.

A skills register for the Civil Service is being developed which will assist with future strategic workforce planning by informing on skills gaps, individual and organisational learning and development plans, workforce plans and future recruitment drives.

Under the leadership of the Secretary General of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and the Secretary General of the Department of An Taoiseach, (as chair of the Civil Service Management Board), specific initiatives are underway to build capability in the Senior Public Service that are intended to mitigate any loss of leadership arising from probable retirements of Senior civil servants. In addition to mobility and Senior Leadership programmes aimed at Assistant Secretaries and Principal Officers there are also talent management, mentoring and coaching programmes equipping serving and emerging leaders with the competencies and skills required to lead into the future.

Ministerial Transport

224. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the number of ministerial cars or vehicles in operation in each of the past six years; and the costs associated with same. [24035/18]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Ministerial cars or vehicles from the fleet of An Garda Síochána have not been operated by my Department over the past six years.

Special Educational Needs Service Provision

225. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason SNA services at a school (details supplied) have been cut for the next academic year; if this cut will be reversed in view of the fact that the service is of enormous importance to the development of children at the school; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23100/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) is responsible, through its network of local Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs) for allocating a quantum of Special Needs Assistant (SNA) support for each school annually taking into account the assessed care needs of children qualifying for SNA support enrolled in the school.

The NCSE allocates SNA support to schools in accordance with the criteria set out in Department Circular 0030/2014, which is available on the Department's website at www.education.ie, in order that students who have care needs can access SNA support as and when it is needed. The Department's policy is to ensure that every child who is assessed as needing SNA support will receive access to such support.

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

SNA allocations to all schools can change from year to year as children with care needs leave the school, as new children with care needs enrol in a school and as children develop more independent living skills and their care needs diminish over time.

I was very pleased to announce on Friday 18th May that 800 additional Special Needs Assistants will be allocated for the beginning of the next school year, with a further 140 expected to be allocated by the end of the year.

I was also pleased that the announcement on Friday was in keeping with the commitment made last year to inform schools of the September 2018 allocation before the end of May. In making this announcement at this time the Department is providing certainty to schools, parents and of course SNA's in relation to the posts that will be in place for the coming school year.

By the end of this year, there will be a total of 15,000 Special Needs Assistants working in our schools, a 42% increase on 2011. The National Council for Special Education notified the schools of their SNA allocations on Friday last and the details of these allocations are now published and available on their website.

The NCSE Appeals Process may be invoked by a parent or a school where it is considered that a child was not granted access to SNA support on the grounds that Department policy was not met in accordance with Circular 0030/2014.

Schools may also appeal a decision, where the school considers that the NCSE, in applying Department policy, has not allocated the appropriate level of SNA supports to the school to meet the special educational and/or care needs of the children concerned.

Where a school has received its allocation of SNA support for 2018/19, but wishes new enrolments or assessments to be considered, which were not taken into account when the initial allocation was made, they may continue to make applications to the NCSE. The closing date

for receipt of any appeals in regard to SNA allocations is Friday, 28th September 2018.

As this question relates to an individual child I have referred the question to the NCSE for their direct reply.

National Development Plan Funding

226. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the funding that will be made available and when for capital developments planned for a school (details supplied) in County Sligo under Project Ireland 2040; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23109/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Since 2007, my Department has invested €1.8m of capital funding in the college referred to by the Deputy. This includes €0.343m of funding approved during the summer of 2017 for refurbishment and repair works related to an increase in its student intake.

The Higher Education Authority (HEA) is currently in discussions with the college in relation to further campus development plans. Officials from the HEA recently met with representatives of the college to discuss its capital requirements and it is expected that an updated submission will shortly be forwarded by the college to the HEA.

The National Development Plan (NDP) signals Exchequer investments of €2.2 billion in higher education infrastructure over the coming decade. This welcome increase in funding will present major new opportunities for the higher education sector. However, it should be noted that the significant ramp up in investment will take place over time and particularly in the second half of the NDP period.

In that context, a capital investment prioritisation framework, together with updated appraisal approaches, will be advanced over the coming months to inform funding decisions and to ensure that maximum impact and value for money can be achieved from Exchequer investments.

Any proposal from a Higher Education Institution that is under consideration for capital funding will be subject to detailed appraisal in accordance with the Public Spending Code.

Apprenticeship Data

227. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated cost of abolishing apprenticeship fees in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23126/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan): An Annual Student Contribution is levied on all students attending Institutes of Technology (IoTs). Previously this Annual Student Contribution was paid by FÁS/SOLAS with apprentices themselves paying the part of the contribution relating to examination fees. As part of Budget 2014, SOLAS ceased making payments to IoTs and apprentices pay the full pro rata Annual Student Contribution.

The amount charged to apprentices is calculated on a pro rata basis of the time which they spend in IoTs during the academic year. This cost would typically be one third of the Annual Student Contribution paid by students attending for the full academic year, currently €3,000 and

would amount to approx. €1,000 per student per annum.

The cost of not charging the Annual Student Contribution is estimated to be €4.2 million in 2018, although there are no plans to abolish the Annual Student Contribution for apprentices.

State Examinations Commission

228. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to address a matter (details supplied) relating to the employment of superintendents by the State Examination Commission for leaving certificate and junior certificate exam centres. [23134/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The State Examinations Commission has statutory responsibility for operational matters relating to the certificate examinations.

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

Schools Building Contractors

229. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a contractor (details supplied) has withdrawn from a tender process for a school; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23161/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The contractor in question has not withdrawn from the tender competition for the project to which the Deputy refers.

However, the local Education and Training Board, to whom the project has been devolved for delivery, has excluded the contractor from the competition and has now moved on to evaluating the tender from the next lowest bidder.

Third Level Fees

230. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the options available to a person (details supplied) who has been deemed suitable for a course in IT Carlow but cannot afford the €9,750 annual fee. [23162/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Under my Department's Free Fees Initiative, the Exchequer provides funding towards tuition fees in respect of eligible students who are pursuing approved full-time undergraduate courses of study within the State. In order to qualify for funding under the Free Fees Initiative, students must be first-time undergraduates, hold inter alia, EU/EEA/Swiss nationality in their own right, and have been ordinarily resident in an EU/EEA/Swiss state for at least three of the five years preceding their entry to an approved third level course.

Eligible students may also receive supports via the statutory based Student Grant Scheme. To qualify for grant support, a grant applicant must meet various criteria relating to means, residency, nationality and progression.

Where students do not qualify for free fees funding, they must pay the appropriate fee - either EU or Non-EU, as determined by each higher education institution. These institutions are

autonomous bodies and the level of fee payable by students who do not meet the requirements of the free fees scheme is a matter for the relevant institution to determine.

Tax relief at the standard rate of tax may be claimed in respect of tuition fees paid for approved courses at approved colleges of higher education. Further information on this tax relief is available from the Revenue Commissioners at www.revenue.ie

Schools Planning

231. **Deputy Noel Rock** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the criteria used for dividing the country into 314 school planning areas; when the criteria was last reviewed; and the body responsible for its review. [23171/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): As the Deputy may be aware, in order to plan for school provision and analyse the relevant demographic data in a way that takes account of the significant local and regional variations in demographic trends and enrolment projections, my Department divides the country into 314 school planning areas, of which some 40 are in Dublin.

Using school planning area boundaries within my Department's Geographic Information System (GIS) allows data within those boundaries, including data for enrolments in schools, child benefit and other relevant data to be added to the mapping information, grouped and analysed. The GIS records the number of primary and post-primary schools within each planning area, the combined enrolments for all of the schools within each area, including total enrolment and enrolment in each class group, together with child benefit data for the 0-4 age group relevant to the area.

In most areas, school planning areas were based on traditional school catchment areas where all primary schools were assigned to a post-primary feeder area (typically a population centre or town), containing one or more post-primary schools. With the introduction of Small Areas in Census 2011, these feeder areas were amended to align with Census Small Areas. The current school planning areas take account not only of local groupings of schools, but also of natural boundaries, Census Small Areas and other local conditions.

These school planning areas are used in the demographic exercise as a basis for the assessment of areas of growth and to inform recommendations on the establishment of any new schools required in that school planning area. My Department does not have plans to review the school planning areas at this point. However, the implementation of Ireland 2040 may require further review of school planning areas based on spatial planning considerations and the roll-out of significant new residential developments over time.

Schools Planning

232. **Deputy Noel Rock** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the school planning areas in which Meakstown and Charlestown belong; and the reason they have not been defined in their own school planning area at this stage. [23172/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): As the Deputy may be aware, in order to plan for school provision and analyse the relevant demographic data, my Department divides the country into 314 school planning areas. For school planning purposes Meakstown/Charlestown is located in the Finglas East_Ballymun_Dublin 11 school planning

area, in which there are currently 9 primary schools.

Each school planning area, including the Finglas East_Ballymun_Dublin11 school planning area, encompasses a number of areas such as Charlestown and Meakstown. It is not necessary to have an individual school planning area for each area and such a division would not allow for a comprehensive analysis of demand in the wider area.

Schools Facilities

233. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the financial supports available to support the development of an astroturf pitch at a school (details supplied); the other schemes that can be applied for in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23177/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I wish to advise the Deputy that my Department's focus in recent years has been on prioritising the funding available for the provision of essential classroom accommodation to meet demographic need.

As the Deputy will be aware, due to the competing demands on my Department's capital budget imposed by the need to prioritise the available funding in this manner, it is not possible at this point to provide an indicative timeframe for the provision of funding for sports facilities generally.

It is open to the school in question to explore any funding options that may be available under the Sports Capital Programme administered by the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport.

Special Educational Needs Staff

234. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his attention has been drawn to the fact that the sole SNA working in a school (details supplied) in County Sligo has been withdrawn; the reason the SNA service has been withdrawn from the school; if the case will be reviewed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23200/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) is responsible, through its network of local Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs) for allocating a quantum of Special Needs Assistant (SNA) support for each school annually taking into account the assessed care needs of children qualifying for SNA support enrolled in the school.

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

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SNA allocations to all schools can change from year to year as children with care needs leave the school, as new children with care needs enrol in a school and as children develop more independent living skills and their care needs diminish over time.

I was very pleased to announce on Friday 18th May that 800 additional Special Needs Assistants will be allocated for the beginning of the next school year, with a further 140 expected to be allocated by the end of the year.

I was also pleased that the announcement on Friday was in keeping with the commitment made last year to inform schools of the September 2018 allocation before the end of May. In making this announcement at this time the Department is providing certainty to schools, parents and of course SNA's in relation to the posts that will be in place for the coming school year.

By the end of this year, there will be a total of 15,000 Special Needs Assistants working in our schools, a 42% increase on 2011. The National Council for Special Education notified the schools of their SNA allocations on Friday last and the details of these allocations are now published and available on their website.

The NCSE Appeals Process may be invoked by a parent or a school where it is considered that a child was not granted access to SNA support on the grounds that Department policy was not met in accordance with Circular 0030/2014.

Schools may also appeal a decision, where the school considers that the NCSE, in applying Department policy, has not allocated the appropriate level of SNA supports to the school to meet the special educational and/or care needs of the children concerned.

Where a school has received its allocation of SNA support for 2018/19, but wishes new enrolments or assessments to be considered, which were not taken into account when the initial allocation was made, they may continue to make applications to the NCSE. The closing date for receipt of any appeals in regard to SNA allocations is Friday, 28th September 2018.

As this question relates to an individual child I have referred the question to the NCSE for their direct reply.

School Staff

235. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a request by a person (details supplied) to become an administrative principal will be examined in order that the appointment can be made in September 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23220/18]

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

The criteria for the appointment of an administrative deputy principal to a school, which are enrolment related, are set out in Appendix B of Circular, 0010/2018. There is no scope to deviate from these arrangements.

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

Schools Facilities

236. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if an application for funding for a sensory garden for a school (details supplied) will be expedited in view of the fact that the school has a successful Autism Spectrum Disorders, ASD, unit and a sensory garden is vital for that service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23221/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I wish to advise the Deputy that my Department provided very significant devolved funding to the school in question to provide a 470m² two classroom ASD Unit.

The grant approved included funding for a large central activities space in the Unit together with a 200m² secure hard/soft play area and six car parking spaces to meet the needs of the children attending the unit in question.

School Accommodation

237. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his attention has been drawn to the case of a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23259/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I can confirm to the Deputy that the school in question applied for significant capital funding for a major development at the school. I understand that it is the school's intention to establish an ASD class in the school in September 2018. As the school's existing accommodation does not have capacity to facilitate the establishment of the class, my Department has approved temporary accommodation, as an interim measure, to the school in view of the urgency. The installation of this temporary accommodation has been devolved to the Board of Management for delivery.

My Department has advised the school that the application for permanent accommodation is currently under consideration and a decision will be conveyed to the school authority as soon as the assessment process has been completed.

Capitation Grants

238. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the allocation of capitation grants for primary schools in County Waterford; the difference between the amount in capitation grants approved and the amount requested respectively, by primary schools in County Waterford; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23260/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): As the Deputy is aware, funding provided by my Department to primary schools is dealt with on a *per capita* basis, including for schools in County Waterford. The two main grants are the Capitation grant to cater for day to day running costs such as heating, lighting, cleaning, insurance, general up-keep etc and the Ancillary Services grant to cater for the cost of employing ancillary services staff.

The standard *per capita* rates of grants paid to all primary schools in the free education scheme are outlined in the table:

Grant Type	Rate per mainstream pupil	Payment date
Capitation	€170.00	January – 1st instalment June – 2nd instalment
Ancillary Grant	€163.00	March
Book Grant	€11.00	April

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

Restoring capitation funding as resources permit is one of the actions included in the Action Plan for Education.

Budget 2018 marked the second year of major reinvestment in the education sector, as we continue to implement the Action Plan for Education, which has the central aim to make the Irish Education and Training service the best in Europe within a decade. In 2018, the budget for the Department of Education increased by €554 million to over €10 billion. Through budget 2017 and Budget 2018, we are now investing €1 billion more in education.

The process is underway for restoring grant funding that is used by schools to fund the salaries of ancillary staff. The ancillary grant was increased by €6 in 2016, €5 in 2017 and €5 in 2018, in order to enable primary schools to implement the arbitration salary increase for grant funded school secretaries and caretakers and to also implement the restoration of salary for cleaners arising from the unwinding of FEMPI legislation.

DEIS Scheme

239. **Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if priority will be given to include a school (details supplied) in the DEIS school programme which is under review; and if his attention has been drawn to the fact that the school meets the criteria under the Pobal Maps 2016 census. [23276/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I wish to advise the Deputy that my Department has, for the first time, introduced an objective, statistics based model for deciding which schools merit inclusion in the DEIS Programme, so that all stakeholders can have confidence that we are targeting extra resources at those schools with the highest concentrated levels of disadvantage.

The key data sources used in the DEIS identification process are the DES Primary Online Database (POD) and Post-Primary Online (PPOD) Databases, and CSO data from the National Census of Population as represented in the Pobal HP Index for Small Areas which is a method of measuring the relative affluence or disadvantage of a particular geographical area. Variables used in the compilation of the HP Index include those related to demographic growth, dependency ratios, education levels, single parent rate, overcrowding, social class, occupation and unemployment rates. This data is combined with pupil data supplied by schools, anonymised and aggregated to small area, to provide information on the relative level of concentrated disadvantage present in the pupil cohort of individual schools.

A detailed document explaining the methodology used in the Identification process is available on the Department’s website at <https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/DEIS-Delivering-Equality-of-Opportunity-in-Schools-/DEIS-Identification-Process.pdf>.

It is important to note that schools included in DEIS with effect from September 2017 are those whose level of disadvantage has been identified as those schools serving the highest con-

centrations of disadvantage among their pupil cohort. Schools which have not been included at this stage are those which have not been identified as having the highest levels of concentrated disadvantage amongst their pupil cohort, under the new identification model.

It is also important to note that this is the first step in a process and the fact that a school has not been included now does not preclude its inclusion at a later date, should the assessment indicate a level of disadvantage that warrants additional supports.

As the Deputy may be aware, an update of the identification model is currently underway. This will take account of updated school data as provided by schools for the current school year combined with the Pobal HP Index of Deprivation, based on CSO Small Area Population statistics derived from the 2016 National Census. It is envisaged that this process will be completed in the coming weeks.

Should this exercise reveal that any school, including the school referred to by the Deputy, which did not qualify for DEIS in 2017 meets the criteria applicable to schools with the highest concentration of disadvantage based on the updated information, then additional schools may be included subject to available resources.

Capitation Grants

240. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will address concerns raised in correspondence (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23280/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I recognise the need to improve capitation funding for schools having regard to the reductions that were necessary over recent years.

It is difficult to make precise comparisons between the levels of grants paid and the actual costs of running schools at primary, post-primary and third level.

In general, post-primary schools and third level institutions are larger than primary schools. They have specialist rooms such as laboratories, workshops etc. This leads to higher unit costs in for heat, light, power, maintenance and cleaning.

Restoring capitation funding as resources permit is one of the actions included in the Action Plan for Education.

Budget 2018 marked the second year of major reinvestment in the education sector, as we continue to implement the Action Plan for Education, which has the central aim to make the Irish Education and Training service the best in Europe within a decade. In 2018, the budget for the Department of Education increased by €554 million to over €10 billion. Through budget 2017 and Budget 2018, we are now investing €1 billion more in education.

The process is underway for restoring grant funding that is used by schools to fund the salaries of ancillary staff. The ancillary grant was increased by €6 in 2016, €5 in 2017 and €5 in 2018, in order to enable primary schools to implement the arbitration salary increase for grant funded school secretaries and caretakers and to also implement the restoration of salary for cleaners arising from the unwinding of FEMPI legislation.

School Management

241. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Question Nos. 103 of 30 November 2017 and 151 of 12 December 2017, the action he would take in the case in which a patron has removed an individual board member from a board of management without his consent; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23295/18]

242. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Question Nos. 103 of 30 November 2017 and 151 of 12 December 2017, the standing of the board of management of a primary school in which the school patron removed a member of the board and replaced them with a new member without his consent by the school's patron contrary to the provisions of the Education Act 1998; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23296/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 241 and 242 together.

Section 14 of the Education Act 1998, provides that the appointment of a Board of Management of a school is a matter for the relevant school patron.

Section 16 of the Education Act 1998 provides that the patron may, either dissolve a Board if they are dissatisfied that the functions of a Board are not being effectively discharged or in the case of an individual member of a Board, the Patron with the consent of the Minister, for good and valid reasons may remove a member from a Board.

In circumstances where a Patron proposes to remove a member of a Board they must follow the process set out in the Education Act which provides for an opportunity for the board member concerned to make representations to the Patron. The Patron may still decide to remove a member of a Board thereafter having considered any representations made and subject the approval of the Minister.

The Governance Manual for Primary Schools 2015 – 2019, published by my Department sets out the various rules for the composition and operation of Boards of Management including the appointment and removal of members of the Board by the Patron. The Governance Manual also provides guidance in relation to situations where a serving board member may become ineligible to serve on a board.

School Management

243. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of updated Appendix F declarations received from patrons of primary schools in regard to the change of the chairperson of a board of management from 1 June to 30 September 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23297/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Section 14 of the Education Act 1998 provides that the appointment of a Board of Management of a school is a matter for the relevant school patron.

The Governance Manual for Primary Schools 2015-2019 published by my Department sets out the requirement for a patron to provide my Department with a completed declaration at Appendix F of the manual where there is a change in chairperson during the term of office of a Board.

There are in excess of 3,200 primary schools and a change of chairperson during the term

of office of a Board can occur for a variety of reasons. The information the Deputy requires in relation to Appendix F declarations received in such circumstances is not readily available in my Department.

Schools Building Projects

244. **Deputy Jan O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason a decision was made in relation to a school construction project (details supplied) to change the plan from a 2 phase to a 1 stage project; the reason the project is only now being devolved to the education and training board since the decision to have a single construction project was made in the last quarter of 2016; the progress made since then; the costs incurred in relation to phase 1; when it is expected that the project will be completed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23335/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I wish to advise the Deputy that a project was approved in March 2015 to deliver significant additional accommodation at the school referred to. This devolved project was the first stage of a phased response to address the accommodation requirements at the school. A further project was included in my Department’s 6 year Capital Programme, to address the school’s accommodation requirements.

As the devolved project did not progress as anticipated my Department reviewed the matter and concluded that it was more appropriate to meet the identified needs by way of a major project; deliver a new 32 classroom replacement school by means of a single construction contract, in two phases, to allow for the continued operation of the school during the construction phase.

The project is being devolved for delivery to the local Education and Training Board (ETB). A Service Level Agreement between the ETB and my Department will underpin the project delivery – this process is ongoing at present. Once this formality has been completed, the next steps are for the ETB to appoint a Design Team to design the project and to bring it through the planning permission and tender and construction stages. It will be a matter for the ETB to progress all aspects of the project, including the appointment of a Design Team, as quickly as possible.

Special Educational Needs Staff Data

245. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the basis on which special needs assistants and other support services teachers are allocated to DEIS schools; the changes made in relation to the process of allocation of SNAs to these schools; if the SENO has discretion in relation to the allocation of SNAs to DEIS schools; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23337/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) is responsible, through its network of local Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs) for allocating a quantum of Special Needs Assistant (SNA) support for each school annually taking into account the assessed care needs of children qualifying for SNA support enrolled in the school.

The NCSE allocates SNA support to schools in accordance with the criteria set out in Department Circular 0030/2014, which is available on the Department’s website at www.education.ie, in order that students who have care needs can access SNA support as and when it is needed. The Department’s policy is to ensure that every child who is assessed as needing SNA

support will receive access to such support.

While the DEIS status of a school is not a relevant criteria for the determination of the levels of SNA supports to be allocated to schools, research has shown that DEIS schools will typically include in their enrolments a substantially higher number of pupils with Disabilities than schools which do not serve disadvantaged communities and as such are more likely to have higher numbers of both Special Education Teachers and SNAs.

In considering applications for SNA supports for individual pupils, the SENOs take account of the pupils' needs and consider the resources available to the school to identify whether additionality is needed or whether the school might reasonably be expected to meet the needs of the pupils from its current level of resources. SNAs are not allocated to individual children but to schools as a school based resource. The manner in which SNAs are allocated is standard across the education sector regardless of a school's designation.

SNA allocations to all schools can change from year to year as children with care needs leave the school, as new children with care needs enrol in a school and as children develop more independent living skills and their care needs diminish over time.

I was very pleased to announce on Friday 18th May that 800 additional Special Needs Assistants will be allocated for the beginning of the next school year, with a further 140 expected to be allocated by the end of the year.

I was also pleased that the announcement on Friday was in keeping with the commitment made last year to inform schools of the September 2018 allocation before the end of May. In making this announcement at this time the Department is providing certainty to schools, parents and of course SNA's in relation to the posts that will be in place for the coming school year.

By the end of this year, there will be a total of 15,000 Special Needs Assistants working in our schools, a 42% increase on 2011. The National Council for Special Education notified the schools of their SNA allocations on Friday last and the details of these allocations are now published and available on their website.

Special Educational Needs

246. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the amount of one to one therapy that will be provided under the speech and language and occupational therapies pilot or demonstration project; if each child who requires therapy will receive it; and if this is an alternative to the HSE waiting list [23366/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I recently announced that a demonstration project to provide in-school and pre-school therapy services will be introduced for the 2018/19 school year.

The project will be managed and co-ordinated by the National Council for Special Education.

The model has been developed by the Departments of Education and Skills, Children and Youth Affairs, Health, and the Health Service Executive (HSE) and National Council for Special Education, and is part of the Government's overall aim to help every child to fulfil their full potential.

The purpose of the project is to develop and test a model of tailored therapeutic supports

that allows for early intervention in terms of providing speech and language and occupational therapy within educational settings.

This innovative pilot will complement the existing HSE funded provision of essential therapy services. It will not act as an alternative or replacement model for these existing HSE services. Children who are attending schools participating in the pilot project, and who receive support from the therapy project in schools, will still qualify for, and access HSE provided therapy supports in the normal way.

This project is designed to bring together therapists and educational professionals who have until now often operated separately.

It will allow them to work together to plan, collaborate, and share their professional knowledge and expertise to more efficiently support greater numbers of pupils in school environments, where there are often large concentrations of need.

The In-School and Pre-School Therapy project will use a multi-tiered approach to providing Universal, Targeted, and Specialist support, along a continuum of provision, depending on the needs of the child/pupil.

The continuum of support model means that the greater, or more severe the level of need, the more intensive the level of support.

The therapists will provide training for teachers and parents in speech language and occupational therapy needs in schools and provide specific training and support to schools and preschools to enable them to deliver structured interventions to children at risk of educational or other difficulties as a result of their therapy needs.

Targeted support will also be provided for some pupils who have significant and persistent Speech, Language and Communication Needs and Occupational Therapy needs. These pupils will receive direct interventions and support from the therapists in schools.

The amount of one to one therapy directly provided by therapists in schools will depend on the extent of needs arising in particular schools, the severity of needs of the individual pupils, and the effectiveness of the interventions which have been put in place following consultation between therapists and teachers.

Schools Building Projects Status

247. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if capital expenditure is now planned for the building project for a school (details supplied); if work will take place in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23406/18]

248. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if the architect previously working on the replacement school project for a school (details supplied) was directly employed by his Department or contracted in for a specified project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23407/18]

249. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason the previous architect for a building project at a school (details supplied) was not replaced when they left in July 2017; the reason for delays in appointing a replacement; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23408/18]

250. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parlia-

mentary Question No. 118 of 22 November 2017, the reason there was no reference to difficulty with sourcing and hiring architects for a school (details supplied) in relation to this project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23409/18]

251. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if there are no architects immediately available with his Department to take on the work of the final sign off to a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23410/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 247 to 251, inclusive, together.

The process to replace the consultant architect and design team leader for the major school building project referred to by the Deputy is currently ongoing.

The Invitation to Tender for the replacement architect issued on 11th May 2018. The closing date for receipt of applications is 28 May 2018. It is anticipated that the replacement architect will be appointed in July 2018.

On appointment the replacement architect, as Design Team Leader, will need to carry out a thorough review, audit and update of the submitted Stage 2(b) documentation in order to satisfy themselves that the major building project is correctly designed, detailed and accurately costed.

Following this review the replacement architect will issue a report to the Board of Management for onward transmission to the Department. Upon review of this report My Department will be in contact with the school with a timeline in relation to the further progression of this project.

The “in-house” Department Architect who was working on this project had outsourced the preparation of the architectural documentation for the Stage 2(b) submission to an external consultant and he would have taken the project forward to tender and construction stages had he not resigned. As he has not yet been replaced the need to tender for an external consultant has arisen.

School Accommodation

252. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when a decision on an application by school (details supplied) for five classrooms will be decided upon; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that if a decision, either positive or negative is not forthcoming from his Department, then this school will have to begin implementing student caps from 2019 onwards; if his attention has further been drawn to the fact that a phased development plan for this application would be possible; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23423/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I can confirm to the Deputy that my Department is in receipt of an application from the school referred to for additional 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.

Teacher Redeployment

253. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if secondary school teachers in County Cork can access the redeployment scheme; and if he will make a

statement on the matter. [23426/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The core function of the redeployment arrangements is to facilitate the redeployment of surplus permanent and CID teachers in all areas, to other schools where vacancies exist. The redeployment of all surplus permanent teachers is key to the Department's ability to manage within its payroll budget and ceiling on teacher numbers.

A redeployment scheme operated on a pilot basis in the Munster region, including County Cork, in 2015 and 2016. All permanent teachers in Munster were given an opportunity to volunteer for a transfer to other areas if such a transfer would free up a vacancy that would facilitate the redeployment of a surplus permanent teacher in the region. In 2018 this scheme operates in counties Galway, Roscommon, Donegal, Cavan, Monaghan, Louth and Meath.

The criteria used for the allocation of teachers to post-primary schools for the 2018/19 school year, including the redeployment arrangements, is available on the Department's website.

Foirne Scoile

254. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** den an Aire Oideachais agus Scileanna cé mhéad múinteoir a bheidh ceadaithe i mí Mheán Fómhair seo chugainn, 2018, do scoil (sonraí tugtha). [23427/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Foilsítear na critéir chun poist teagaisc a leithdháileadh ar bhonn bliantúil ar shuíomh gréasáin na Roinne (Ciorclán 0010/2018). Is é an príomhfhachtóir chun leibhéal na n-acmhainní teagaisc a sholáthar i scoileanna aonair de ná an sceideal foirne don scoilbhliana ábhartha agus an líon daltaí ar rolla na scoile ar an 30 Meán Fómhair roimhe.

Tá liosta de na rollaí chun sceideal na foirne a oibriú don scoilbhliain 2018/2019 in Aguisín A den Sceideal Foirne. Is féidir le scoileanna seiceáil a dhéanamh ar a leibhéal foirne príomhshrutha don scoilbhliain 2018/2019.

Is ionann 741 ar an rolla agus príomhoide agus 28 post ranga príomhshrutha.

Oibrítear an sceideal foirne go soiléir agus go trédhearcach agus caitear le gach scoil den chineál chéanna mar a gcéanna, beag beann ar an áit a bhfuil siad suite.

English translation:

Question:

To ask the Minister for Education and Skills how many teachers will be allowed (allocated) next September, 2018, to (school details given) school.

Answer:

The criteria used for the allocation of teaching posts is published annually on the Department website (Circular 0010/2018). The key factor for determining the level of staffing resources provided at individual school level is the staffing schedule for the relevant school year and pupil enrolments on the previous 30 September.

The enrolment tables for the operation of the staffing schedule for the 2018/2019 school

year are listed at Appendix A of the Staffing Schedule. This enables schools to check their mainstream staffing levels for the 2018/2019 school year.

An enrolment of 741 pupils warrants an allocation of Principal plus 28 Mainstream Classroom Teaching posts.

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

Capitation Grants

255. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to invest further in capitation grants for primary schools. [23497/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I recognise the need to improve capitation funding for schools having regard to the reductions that were necessary over recent years.

Restoring capitation funding as resources permit is one of the actions included in the Action Plan for Education.

Budget 2018 marked the second year of major reinvestment in the education sector, as we continue to implement the Action Plan for Education, which has the central aim to make the Irish Education and Training service the best in Europe within a decade. In 2018, the budget for the Department of Education increased by €554 million to over €10 billion. Through budget 2017 and Budget 2018, we are now investing €1 billion more in education.

The process is underway for restoring grant funding that is used by schools to fund the salaries of ancillary staff. The ancillary grant was increased by €6 in 2016, €5 in 2017 and €5 in 2018, in order to enable primary schools to implement the arbitration salary increase for grant funded school secretaries and caretakers and to also implement the restoration of salary for cleaners arising from the unwinding of FEMPI legislation.

Summer Works Scheme

256. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans for a new summer works scheme; the proposed expenditure for the scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23586/18]

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

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

To date, almost €80 million has been approved under the current round of the Scheme, in respect of 635 school projects, 464 primary and 171 post-primary schools, for gas, electrical up-

grades, mechanical, sanitation and roof improvement works.. Details of the successful school applicants, are published on the Department's website www.education.ie.

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

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

Summer Works Scheme Eligibility

257. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if the necessary upgrading or provision of play areas at primary schools will be included in the categories of necessary works eligible for funding under the summer works scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23587/18]

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

There are 10 categories of works under the Summer Works Scheme, agreed with the education partners some years ago. I can confirm that the upgrade/provision of play areas is included under Category 10, i.e. external environment projects.

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

Capitation Grants

258. **Deputy Seamus Healy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to restore and increase the capitation grants to primary schools; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23591/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I recognise the need to improve capitation funding for schools having regard to the reductions that were necessary over recent years.

Restoring capitation funding as resources permit is one of the actions included in the Action Plan for Education.

Budget 2018 marked the second year of major reinvestment in the education sector, as we continue to implement the Action Plan for Education, which has the central aim to make the Irish Education and Training service the best in Europe within a decade. In 2018, the budget for the Department of Education increased by €554 million to over €10 billion. Through budget 2017 and Budget 2018, we are now investing €1 billion more in education.

The process is underway for restoring grant funding that is used by schools to fund the salaries of ancillary staff. The ancillary grant was increased by €6 in 2016, €5 in 2017 and €5 in 2018, in order to enable primary schools to implement the arbitration salary increase for grant funded school secretaries and caretakers and to also implement the restoration of salary for cleaners arising from the unwinding of FEMPI legislation.

Third Level Courses Availability

259. **Deputy Seamus Healy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the courses that are available at the LIT campus, Clonmel for the coming academic year; the courses that have been withdrawn from LIT Campus, Clonmel for the coming academic year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23596/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The course that are available at LIT Clonmel Campus for the Academic Year 2018/19 are -

CAO Listed Courses

LC502 Game Art & Design (Level 8)

LC517 Creative Media and Design (Level 8)

LC518 Digital Animation Production (Level 8)

LC504 Creative Media and Design (Level 7)

LC515 Digital Animation Production (Level 7)

LC516 Game Art and Design Production (Level 7)

Direct Entry Courses

LC514 Creative Media and Design (Level 6)

Flexible Learning Courses

Diploma in Quality Management (Part 1)

Diploma in Quality Management (Part 2)

Certificate in Transport Safety Management

H.Dip. in Business Management (New)

H.Dip. in Digital Marketing (New)

Certificate in 3D Animation & Visual Effects (New)

There are two courses withdrawn from LIT Clonmel Campus for 2018/19, as demand for these programmes has been declining year on year for a number of years.

LC513 Business (Level 8)

LC501 Business (Level 7).

Special Educational Needs Service Provision

260. **Deputy Seamus Healy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will restore the SNA position and hours for a school (details supplied) and the ASD unit in the school; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23597/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) is responsible, through its network of local Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs) for allocating a quantum of Special Needs Assistant (SNA) support for each school annually taking into account the assessed care needs of children qualifying for SNA support enrolled in the school.

The NCSE allocates SNA support to schools in accordance with the criteria set out in Department Circular 0030/2014, which is available on the Department's website at www.education.ie, in order that students who have care needs can access SNA support as and when it is needed. The Department's policy is to ensure that every child who is assessed as needing SNA support will receive access to such support.

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

SNA allocations to all schools can change from year to year as children with care needs leave the school, as new children with care needs enrol in a school and as children develop more independent living skills and their care needs diminish over time.

I was very pleased to announce on Friday 18 May that 800 additional Special Needs Assistants will be allocated for the beginning of the next school year, with a further 140 expected to be allocated by the end of the year.

I was also pleased that the announcement was in keeping with the commitment made last year to inform schools of the September 2018 allocation before the end of May. In making this announcement at this time the Department is providing certainty to schools, parents and of course SNA's in relation to the posts that will be in place for the coming school year.

By the end of this year, there will be a total of 15,000 Special Needs Assistants working in our schools, a 42% increase on 2011. The National Council for Special Education notified the schools of their SNA allocations on Friday last and the details of these allocations are now published and available on their website.

The NCSE Appeals Process may be invoked by a parent or a school where it is considered that a child was not granted access to SNA support on the grounds that Department policy was not met in accordance with Circular 0030/2014.

Schools may also appeal a decision, where the school considers that the NCSE, in applying Department policy, has not allocated the appropriate level of SNA supports to the school to meet the special educational and/or care needs of the children concerned.

Where a school has received its allocation of SNA support for 2018/19, but wishes new enrolments or assessments to be considered, which were not taken into account when the initial allocation was made, they may continue to make applications to the NCSE. The closing date for receipt of any appeals in regard to SNA allocations is Friday, 28th September 2018.

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

The consideration of professional reports is an integral part of determining the extent of supports to be provided for pupils with special educational needs. In making allocations to schools, the NCSE takes into account the assessed individual needs of all children with identified needs who are currently enrolled in the school.

The NCSE have confirmed that there are no plans to remove the ASD unit from this school.

School Staff

261. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if, when viewing the application by a school (details supplied) in County Tipperary for an extra teacher, cognisance will be taken of the fact that the school has an ASD unit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23606/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The criteria used for the allocation of teaching posts is published annually on the Department website. The key factor for determining the level of staffing resources provided at individual school level is the staffing schedule for the relevant school year and pupil enrolments on the previous 30 September. The staffing schedule operates in a clear and transparent manner and treats all similar types of schools equally irrespective of location.

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

The school referred to by the Deputy submitted an application for consideration by the Appeals Board at its May 2018 meeting under the Small Schools criteria. The appeal was provisionally approved by the Appeals Board pending confirmation of the actual enrolments in September 2018.

The school has been notified of the outcome of the appeal. The Appeals Board operates

independently of the Department and its decision is final.

Special Educational Needs

262. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if the concerns of persons in regard to the impact that a SNA reduction will have on a child (details supplied) will be addressed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23607/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) is responsible, through its network of local Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs) for allocating a quantum of Special Needs Assistant (SNA) support for each school annually taking into account the assessed care needs of children qualifying for SNA support enrolled in the school.

The NCSE allocates SNA support to schools in accordance with the criteria set out in Department Circular 0030/2014, which is available on the Department's website at www.education.ie, in order that students who have care needs can access SNA support as and when it is needed. The Department's policy is to ensure that every child who is assessed as needing SNA support will receive access to such support.

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

SNA allocations to all schools can change from year to year as children with care needs leave the school, as new children with care needs enrol in a school and as children develop more independent living skills and their care needs diminish over time.

I was very pleased to announce on Friday 18 May that 800 additional Special Needs Assistants will be allocated for the beginning of the next school year, with a further 140 expected to be allocated by the end of the year.

I was also pleased that the announcement was in keeping with the commitment made last year to inform schools of the September 2018 allocation before the end of May. In making this announcement at this time the Department is providing certainty to schools, parents and of course SNA's in relation to the posts that will be in place for the coming school year.

By the end of this year, there will be a total of 15,000 Special Needs Assistants working in our schools, a 42% increase on 2011. The National Council for Special Education notified the schools of their SNA allocations on Friday last and the details of these allocations are now published and available on their website.

The NCSE Appeals Process may be invoked by a parent or a school where it is considered that a child was not granted access to SNA support on the grounds that Department policy was not met in accordance with Circular 0030/2014.

Schools may also appeal a decision, where the school considers that the NCSE, in applying Department policy, has not allocated the appropriate level of SNA supports to the school to meet the special educational and/or care needs of the children concerned.

Where a school has received its allocation of SNA support for 2018/19, but wishes new

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enrolments or assessments to be considered, which were not taken into account when the initial allocation was made, they may continue to make applications to the NCSE. The closing date for receipt of any appeals in regard to SNA allocations is Friday, 28th September 2018.

As this question relates to an individual child I have referred the question to the NCSE for their direct reply.

Schools Building Projects Status

263. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the progress to date in the facilitation of an extension for a school (details supplied) with particular reference to demographic demand in the area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23625/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): My Department's Capital Programme (2016-2021) continues to address the challenges posed by the significant bulge in pupil enrolments going through our schools. This has seen a significant expansion in the rate of provision of new school places. The Capital Programme details the school projects that are being progressed through the architectural planning process, including those schools in County Kildare. The Capital Programme also provides for devolved funding for additional classrooms, if required, for schools where an immediate enrolment need has been identified or where an additional teacher has been appointed. My Department has received an application for capital funding from the primary school referred to in the details supplied by the Deputy. The application will be considered and a decision will be conveyed to the school authorities as soon as the assessment process has been completed.

I wish to advise the Deputy of my recent announcement regarding the establishment of 42 new schools over the next four years (2019 to 2022). This announcement follows nationwide demographic exercises carried out by the Department into the future need for primary and post-primary schools across the country and the 4-year horizon will enable increased lead-in times for planning and delivery of the necessary infrastructure.

I also wish to advise the Deputy that my Department has set out on its website at www.education.ie - Building Works, the current status of building projects and this is updated regularly.

State Examinations Fees

264. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the rationale for the decision to more than double the fee to repeat the leaving certificate examination to €116; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23632/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The State Examinations Commission has statutory responsibility for operational matters relating to the certificate examinations.

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

Teaching Qualifications

265. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason

the educational qualifications achieved by a person (details supplied) in the UK have not been recognised here; his views on whether there is a need to review the criteria for recognising such qualifications; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23633/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Under the Teaching Council Acts 2001-2015 the Teaching Council is the statutory body with responsibility for the registration of teachers.

The person to whom the Deputy refers is advised to continue to liaise directly with the Teaching Council in relation to meeting the requirements for registration.

School Transport Appeals

266. **Deputy Bobby Aylward** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the annual cost of running and maintaining the school transport appeals board; the value of payments to staff and all associated staff in each of the years 2015 to 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23646/18]

267. **Deputy Bobby Aylward** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of appeals granted by the school transport appeals board in each of the years 2015 to 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23647/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 266 and 267 together.

School transport is a significant operation managed by Bus Éireann on behalf of the Department.

Currently over 116,000 children, including almost 12,000 children with special educational needs, are being transported in over 4,500 vehicles on a daily basis to primary and post-primary schools throughout the country covering over 100 million kilometres annually at a total cost of almost €190 million in 2017.

The School Transport Appeals Board is independent of my Department. Under the terms of reference of the Board, the Board determines appeals against decisions made by, or on behalf of, the Department of Education and Skills regarding the provision of school transport services and/or grant-aid under the terms of the School Transport Schemes.

I can advise that since 2015, 558 appeals were made to the Board, none of which were upheld. However, a number of appeals were referred by the Board to my Department's School Transport Section for clarification and/or further consideration arising from additional information which came to light during the appeals process.

Payments to the Appeals Board Members were as follows:

2015: €14,500

2016: €15,800

2017: €29,400.

Special Educational Needs Service Provision

268. **Deputy Denise Mitchell** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when a planned specialist autism unit at a school (details supplied) will open; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23665/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I wish to advise the Deputy that my Department approved funding to the school in question to undertake re-configuration works within the school building to provide accommodation for pupils with special educational needs. The project has been devolved to the Board of Management for delivery.

The school has since sought funding for additional works and this request is currently being considered by my Department. A decision will be conveyed to the school authority as soon as this process has been concluded.

Student Universal Support Ireland

269. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when the report underway in respect of the SUSI grant is due to be published; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23671/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Report of the Expert Group on Future Funding (Cassells Report) which was published in July 2016, clearly outlines the funding challenges in the higher education sector and offers a number of potential policy approaches for consideration.

As committed to in the Programme for Government, I referred the Cassell's Report to the Oireachtas Education Committee to review its recommendations and outline a proposed funding plan for the sector, as part of the process of building political consensus around the most appropriate means of ensuring a sustainable funding model for the future.

In January 2018, 18 months after publication of the Report, my Department received a request from the Oireachtas Committee for the Department to carry out a comprehensive economic evaluation of each of the recommendations put forward in the Report. I have agreed to this request. My Department and I are currently considering the most appropriate means of undertaking the economic examination of each of the proposed policy options presented in the Report to assist the Committee and to ensure that a sustainable funding model for Higher Education is developed to support the realisation of the economy's growth potential.

Policy decisions in relation to the Student Grant Scheme will be considered in the wider context of the Cassells Report, however, the statutory based Student Grant Scheme and Student Support Regulations continue to be reviewed annually by my Department, following consultation with various stakeholders.

The Student Grant Scheme and Student Support Regulations for the 2018/19 academic year, were published on 28 March 2018. SUSI's online grant application system opened on 5 April 2018.

School Closures

270. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a request from parents, pupils and teaching staff to close a school (details supplied) on a phased basis over a year or more will be given consideration in view of the disruption that will be caused by its immediate closure; if he has been contacted by the Archdiocese of Dublin regarding the matter;

and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23678/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): There have been ongoing discussions and communication between the Archdiocese of Dublin and my Department regarding this matter. Following further very recent discussions, further consideration is being given to this issue.

Schools Data

271. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the name of each primary and secondary school in County Mayo that does not have a physical education hall; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23689/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I wish to advise the Deputy that my Department does not hold details relating to the information requested.

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

Education Expenditure

272. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the budget spent by his Department on the provision of music tuition for children in each of the past ten years. [23733/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): My Department is engaged in a range of activities around the provision of music tuition for children and young people.

Exact expenditure figures regarding the teaching of Music in primary and post-primary schools are not available, as funding is not allocated by my Department on a subject-by-subject basis. However, there is curricular provision for music at both primary and post-primary levels.

In primary schools, the music curriculum provides for pupils to develop an awareness of musical concepts. Music education forms part of the Arts Education curriculum area, comprising music, visual arts and drama, in respect of which a minimum of 3 hours tuition time per week is recommended, with 2 hours and 30 minutes for infant classes. Additionally, the primary curriculum allocates discretionary tuition time which may be spent on music.

In post-primary schools, the decision to offer music for junior and senior cycle lies with individual schools. Music at both junior and senior cycle consists of a series of interrelated musical activities aimed at developing performing, composing and listening skills.

Outside of the mainstream school curriculum for music, many initiatives and bodies are provided with funding by my Department who, at their discretion, may allocate funding to music education, or may allocate a portion of funding to music education for children.

For example, the Creative Engagement programme is managed by the NAPD (National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals). Each year projects are produced in schools

under this programme, ranging from theatre and film through to sculpture and music. My Department is one of the sponsors of the programme with an annual contribution of €55,000.

My Department also provides funding to the Cross Border Orchestra of Ireland. An annual payment of €60,000 has been made since 2014. The Orchestra was established in 1995 as a peace initiative and is composed of over 100 young musicians from all over Ireland and Northern Ireland.

Additionally, my Department funds Music Generation which was established in 2009, following philanthropic donations from U2 and the Ireland Funds. Following this, Music Generation established 11 Music Education Partnerships (MEPs) in 12 counties.

In 2014, my Department began funding Music Generation's 11 MEPs. Funding increased in the following years as follows:

Year	Amount
2014	€300k
2015	€1.39m
2016	€2.4m
2017	€2.485m
2018	€2.485m

In 2017, my Department committed to the expansion of Music Generation, with a further 9 MEPs being announced. These are initially to be funded with philanthropic funding, with my Department commencing funding when philanthropic funding ceases.

As part of Creative Youth, the plan for Pillar 1 of the Government's Creative Ireland programme, Government has also committed to the national expansion of Music Generation by 2022.

My Department also established a Non-Mainstream Music Education Bursary in 2016. The total amount available for award was €50,000 that year, which was increased to €100,000 in 2017. This increased amount has been retained for 2018.

Co-operation hours are teaching hours provided for a range of activities to a number of Education and Training Boards (ETBs). Though not all hours are used for the provision of music education for children, a significant portion of the hours allocated to each ETB are used for this purpose. The estimate of expenditure for each of the past 10 years is as follows:

Year	Amount
2008/09	€6.2m
2009/10	€6.2m
2010/11	€5.9m
2011/12	€6.0m
2012/13	€6.0m
2013/14	€6.2m
2014/15	€6.1m
2015/16	€5.9m
2016/17	€5.9m
2017/18	€5.9m

273. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the amount paid annually for free legal aid as a result of insurance claims; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23751/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Legal Aid Board is the statutory body responsible for the provision of legal advice and legal aid to persons of insufficient means in civil cases. The vast majority of persons who are granted legal aid by the Board seek assistance in relation to family law, child care matters or with applications for international protection in the State.

Civil litigation cases represent a very small proportion of the total cases dealt with by the Board. In 2017 approximately 3% of applications (520 of 17,172) received by the Board for legal services related to general civil law matters. Of these, 219 related to personal injuries cases including medical negligence, 45 of which were granted legal aid to pursue civil litigation cases in accordance with the Civil Legal Aid Act 1995.

The Legal Aid Board does not collate its statistics in a manner that would demonstrate how many of the above cases would specifically involve an insurance claim, or what cost would be associated with these cases.

Ministerial Functions

274. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he or officials in his Department were involved in the Judicial Appointments Commissions Bill 2017. [23442/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): My predecessor, then Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality, presented the Judicial Appointments Commission Bill 2017 to Dáil Eireann. The Deputy will know that since I was appointed Minister, I have been involved in progressing the Bill in its passage through the House. My officials were, and continue to be involved, in preparing the Bill and the Scheme of a Bill which preceded it and in the work supporting the Bill's passage through the Houses.

Insurance Fraud

275. **Deputy Seán Barrett** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the steps taken to deal with fraudulent insurance claims; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23107/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Cost of Insurance Working Group was established by the Minister for Finance in July 2016. The objective of the Working Group was to identify and examine the drivers of the cost of insurance, and recommend short, medium and longer term measures to address the issue of increasing insurance costs, taking account of the requirement for the need to ensure a financially stable insurance sector.

A significant factor in the rising cost of insurance, identified in both the first and second reports of the Working Group (on (i) motor insurance and (ii) employer's liability/public liability respectively), is the impact of fraudulent insurance claims. As such, the reports include a number of recommendations relating to insurance fraud.

Recommendation 25 of the Report on the Cost of Motor Insurance recommends the establishment of a fully functioning integrated insurance fraud database for industry to detect pat-

terms of fraud.

As recommendation lead, my Department established a working group to progress the related action points. The Group is made up of representatives from my Department, An Garda Síochána's National Economic Crime Bureau (GNECB), Insurance Ireland and the Motor Insurers' Bureau of Ireland (MIBI). The Group has completed a report, which includes recommended parameters for the database, who will be responsible for administering the database and disseminating data and how the database will be funded.

The report of the Group was submitted to the Office of the Attorney General and the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner (ODPC) and, in response, the ODPC has strongly endorsed the Group's view that detailed Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIAs) will be required in order to justify the potential addition of new datasets to the existing Insurance Link database, and the increased sharing of data. The ODPC also recommends that further work needs to be undertaken to detail the evidential requirements for the creation of a new database or the enhancement of the existing Insurance Link database.

The application of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) last week and the related data protection legislation, which I launched with Minister of State Breen in February this year, will have a significant impact on any new data sharing arrangements between industry members and between the industry and An Garda Síochána. As such, the establishment of any new data sharing structures will require careful consideration against the changes to the legislative landscape.

As a starting point, it is necessary for a review to be undertaken by the insurance industry of the information held on Insurance Link in the context of the GDPR. It is also necessary for the industry to assess in more detail what specific additional data is proposed to be shared and in what additional circumstances such data is proposed to be shared. It is essential that a critical balance is identified to ensure that data sharing between insurers is maximised while, at the same time, the data rights of the public are protected. Any changes, therefore, to the existing data-sharing arrangements for the purposes of Insurance Link must be proportional to their effect.

I am informed that Insurance Ireland expects to complete a detailed DPIA in this regard by the end of August 2018.

Recommendation 26 of the same report relates to exploring the potential for further cooperation between the insurance sector and An Garda Síochána in relation to insurance fraud investigation. Specifically, this involves considering the feasibility of establishing a specialised and dedicated insurance fraud unit within An Garda Síochána, funded by industry.

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

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

Any proposed agreed mechanism will, of course, ultimately be subject to the approval of the

Garda Commissioner and myself, as Minister for Justice and Equality.

Recommendations 11 and 12 of the Report on the Cost of Employer and Public Liability Insurance relate to the production of statistics relating to the number of complaints, investigations, prosecutions and convictions relating to fraud within the personal injuries area. My Department has liaised with the GNECB in relation to the production of these statistics, and I am informed that the necessary Pulse update is anticipated to be in place by the end of June 2018.

Recommendation 13 of the Report on the Cost of Employer and Public Liability Insurance is aimed at developing a set of guidelines in respect of the reporting of suspected fraudulent insurance claims. The aim is to have a clear path to streamline the process of reporting suspected fraud and to ensure that complaints are received by the relevant sections in An Garda Síochána. A 'Fraud Roundtable' has been convened on a number of occasions to work towards implementation of this recommendation. The roundtable comprises the GNECB, my Department, the Courts Service, the DPP, Insurance Ireland and the Department of Finance.

While guidelines were published in 2004, these have only been used to a very limited extent over the years and the Cost of Insurance Working Group proposed that a new set of guidelines should be developed, using the 2004 protocol as a starting point. In line with the intention to use the existing guidelines to inform the drafting of new, fit for purpose guidelines, An Garda Síochána has produced a draft document which has been communicated to Insurance Ireland. The draft document proposed a number of changes to the section of the existing guidelines concerning the station or section within An Garda Síochána to which a formal complaint should be made. Insurance Ireland signalled its agreement with the changes proposed at the roundtable session on 26 March 2018.

At this same session, it was also agreed that further consultations with stakeholders regarding the proposed guidelines would take place, including with insurance providers not represented by Insurance Ireland, and a meeting to this effect was held on 27 April 2018, with a further meeting to be scheduled in the near future.

The Fraud Roundtable also proposes to examine the follow-on procedure in circumstances where fraud or exaggeration is identified in court or acknowledged by a judge.

Agreement on the new set of guidelines is expected to be completed on time in Quarter 3 2018.

The Courts Service and An Garda Síochána are engaging with my Department on an ongoing basis in relation to the recommendations of the Cost of Insurance Working Group.

The Deputy may also be interested to note that the Department of Finance issues regular quarterly updates on its website in relation to the implementation of the respective reports of the Cost of Insurance Working Group, the latest (fifth) of which was published on 11 May 2018.

Garda Training

276. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of members of An Garda Síochána that have received specialist training to interview children as witnesses, victims and suspects; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23131/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will appreciate, it is the Garda Commissioner who is responsible for carrying on and managing and controlling generally the administration and business of An Garda Síochána including training

and I, as Minister, have no direct role in the matter.

I have requested the specific information sought by the Deputy from the Commissioner and I will write to him on receipt of same.

Transport Policy

277. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the progress he has made with the Ministers for Transport, Tourism and Sport, Housing, Planning and Local Government, Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, the Garda Commissioner and other relevant agencies in identifying more effective possible solutions which can assist in dealing with the use of scrambler and quad bikes; the responsibilities he has assigned to each agency; the time-frame in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23133/18]

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

The purpose of the cross-sectoral meeting was to ascertain whether there are additional legislative or other solutions, which can assist in dealing with the misuse of scramblers and quad bikes more comprehensively, with a view to determining responsibility and timeframes for implementation of solutions identified.

I am advised that the meeting took account of a range of perspectives on the misuse of scramblers and quad bikes, and also considered the experiences currently being encountered in tackling this matter.

By way of next steps, my Department's officials will engage with the Office of the Attorney General to obtain legal advice in relation to the interpretation of a number of relevant pieces of legislation identified at the meeting to determine whether any legislative amendments are necessary to assist in curbing anti-social activity insofar as scramblers and quad bikes are concerned. Detailed correspondence to the Attorney General has been prepared and circulated to all of the meeting participants for their observations and will issue shortly.

My officials are also identifying issues to form the basis of further consultations with local authorities in the context of the positive engagement fostered by local authorities with local communities, examples of which include community and youth-centred projects, such as the various horse projects. The experiences of local authorities involved in these and other projects will be very informative to my Department in terms of assessing the contribution that such collaborative approaches can make to reducing the misuse of these vehicles.

An important element of this issue is the misuse of scramblers and quad bikes by minors. I am advised that the Road Safety Authority (RSA) intends to run a safety campaign later this year with the aim of discouraging those who may consider purchasing scramblers or quad-bikes as Christmas presents for minors. The RSA is currently considering the optimum time to launch this campaign. I might add that the RSA targets road safety awareness campaigns at young people throughout the school curriculum.

The Deputy will be aware that the supply of mechanically propelled vehicles to persons under 16 and 17 (depending on the vehicle) constitute offences under Section 30 of the Road

Traffic Act 2004.

I remain committed to actively supporting any positive actions that can be pursued to counteract the serious public safety issues associated with the misuse of scramblers and quad bikes.

Immigration Controls

278. **Deputy Noel Rock** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to review the immigration checks at Dublin Airport in view of frequent complaints; and the actions that are being taken to review the length of time it is taking to process persons at the Airport since the civilianisation of the checks. [23176/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The empirical evidence available to the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department, who operate the front line immigration service at Dublin airport, shows that the vast majority of arriving passengers are immigrated in a matter of minutes. Information supplied by Dublin Airport Authority (DAA) relating to time taken for arriving passengers to be immigrated shows that over 90% of all travellers are processed through immigration control in a matter of minutes. This percentage figure is significantly higher for passengers of EU nationalities. This is in the context of passenger numbers at Dublin Airport reaching record levels last year with almost 30 million passengers using the airport and compares very favourably with other modern airports in other jurisdictions.

I am also advised by INIS that the number of complaints it directly receives in relation to delays is extremely small - on average 60 per annum or to put it another way, 0.0004% of inbound passengers in 2017. It is the case that sometimes social media is used by passengers to raise concerns. On occasions when INIS has examined some of this coverage, it often transpires that passengers measure the time taken to clear all aspects of the arrival process, including embarking from the aircraft, baggage collection, customs, etc. with the immigration process only accounting for a portion of this period.

However, there are specific pressure points outside of the control of the immigration authorities that can create some delay. Typically, this arises when a very high number of flights arrive within a specific time period (which occurs at Terminal 1 in the late evening period) with consequent increases to passenger numbers within these peak times. This situation can be compounded when, in addition to scheduled arrivals, delayed flights also land during these peak periods.

Additional immigration officers have been recruited for the airport and the allocation of personnel is designed to have the maximum number of staff on duty during the peak periods so that all available immigration booths are operational at these times. The number of available booths is a function of the physical infrastructure at each Terminal. Every effort is made by immigration officers to exercise their function as speedily as possible consistent with the requirement to protect our borders and facilitate legitimate travellers.

While the immigration authorities at Dublin Airport have no control over the number of flights, their scheduling or actual arrival times, they have an excellent relationship with the DAA and air carriers. All parties work closely together across a number of fronts to address capacity and queue management where they arise to alleviate congestion, to maximise passenger throughput, and ensure waiting times are kept to a minimum.

I might add that automatic border control 'eGates' have been operational at Dublin Airport since 30 November last. The eGates are open to Irish and EU e-passport holders over the age

of 18 and it is planned that their use will be extended to other categories of passengers as the programme develops. While their purpose is primarily an immigration control facility, they do have the effect of contributing overall to increased immigration processing capacity, particularly during spikes in passenger arrivals.

Direct Provision Data

279. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of direct provision residents over 18 years of age that have been in the asylum process for nine months or more and have not yet received a first instance decision. [23263/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): There are 1,317 Direct Provision residents over 18 years of age that have been in the protection process for nine months or more and have not yet received a first instance decision.

As of 17 May 2018, over half of cases in the International Protection Office awaiting a first instance decision and where the applicant is accommodated under the system of Direct Provision, are less than one year in the system, while 95% are two years or less and 99.5% are three years or less. This is a major improvement from the situation when the McMahon Working Group reported on the matter in June 2015.

On 31 December 2016, the International Protection Act 2015 was commenced, providing for a single application procedure. 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.

Garda Operations

280. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the breakdown of the divisional data contained in the August 2017 report into the examination of the recording of breath tests at mandatory alcohol and intoxicant testing checkpoints by Garda district. [23289/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I have requested a report from An Garda Síochána in relation to the statistics sought by the Deputy and I will be in contact with the Deputy directly on receipt of this report.

Garda Transport Data

281. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of additional marked motorcycles allocated to the roads policing unit in each of the years 2015 to 2017 and to date in 2018; if this number will be further increased in 2018; the number of motorcycles withdrawn from the roads policing unit in each of the years 2015 to 2017 and to date in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23333/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will ap-

preciate, 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.

The Government's Capital Plan 2016 – 2021 provides €46 million 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.

I am informed by the Garda authorities that the information requested by the Deputy in relation to marked motorcycles is outlined in the following table:

Marked motorcycles allocated to and withdrawn from Roads Policing

(*all figures as at 31 December unless otherwise stated)

Year	Allocated	Withdrawn
2015	0	32
2016	48	11
2017	0	11
2018 (as at 28 May)	3	4

I understand from the Garda authorities that as of 29 May 2018 there are 115 motorcycles in the Garda fleet, of which 92 are attached to Roads Policing. The allocation of Garda vehicles is monitored and reviewed by the Garda authorities on a continual basis and vehicles are allocated between districts as required by operational circumstances. I further understand from the Garda authorities that it is not planned to purchase additional motorcycles in 2018.

Road Traffic Legislation

282. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will report on Garda Operation Rickshaw; the number of persons arrested and charged to date; the number of successful convictions obtained to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23334/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): Issues relating to the regulation of rickshaws under road traffic legislation are for my colleague the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, Mr. Shane Ross, T.D. to consider.

As I have previously indicated, the involvement of rickshaw drivers in the supply of illegal drugs is a matter of considerable concern. This is particularly so having regard to the potential risks to the safety and security of people who travel in rickshaws as passengers, but also members of the public generally. Drug dealing, wherever it occurs and whatever form it takes, brings risks to everybody, be they buyers, sellers or members of An Garda Síochána.

Operational strategies and initiatives undertaken by An Garda Síochána are supported and supplemented when necessary by Regional and National Units such as the Garda National Drugs and Organised Crime Bureau and the Criminal Investigation Bureau, as well as the Criminal Assets Bureau. Multi-disciplinary approaches are utilised to ensure that those involved in illicit drugs activity are effectively targeted, as was recently seen in the Prime Time report of

‘Wheeling and Dealing - Rickshaw Riders’.

An Garda Síochána’s initiative in relation to drug dealing by rickshaw drivers took place between 1 May 2016 and 2 December 2017. During this period, Garda personnel attached to the Pearse Street Garda District identified eighty-seven (87) rickshaw drivers operating in the Dublin Metropolitan Region South Central who were suspected of committing offences contrary to Sections 3 and 15 of the Misuse of Drugs Acts 1977 to 2016. The arrested individuals are currently being pursued through the courts.

In addition, the Pearse Street Garda District, supported by the Garda National Drugs and Organised Crime Bureau, undertook a local crime prevention initiative on eighteen occasions, involving sixteen different rickshaw operators, to test purchase controlled drugs during the period 20 December 2016 and 17 March 2017.

It seems clear that An Garda Síochána is very much alive to the issue and that the illegal activity involved is closely monitored with successful on-going policing operations in the areas concerned. This was clearly evidenced in the Prime Time Report which showed undercover officers involved in a number of arrests on one given night.

Closed-Circuit Television Systems Provision

283. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the funding allocated for local community CCTV schemes; the amount drawn down; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23356/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy is aware, the Programme for a Partnership Government commits to supporting investment in CCTV systems. In pursuance of this commitment, a community-based CCTV grant-aid scheme was launched by my Department in 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 €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.

There has been an increasing level of enquiries relating to the scheme. 11 applications have been received to date and I understand that a number of other applications are currently being finalised for submission.

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 received to date have been returned to the applicants concerned, to enable them to provide the information necessary to qualify for grant-aid.

Successful applicants receive an up-front payment of 50% of approved funding upon approval of the grant, with the balance to be paid when the CCTV system is fully operational. I can confirm that of the 4 approved applications, involving approved funding of almost €120,000, 1 of these CCTV systems is now fully operational and accordingly in that case, 100% of the grant awarded has been paid out. The initial grant payment of 50% of the approved total has been paid in the other 3 cases and in each case, the balance of the grant will be paid when these CCTV systems are fully operational.

It should be noted that the scheme is modelled closely on the previous grant-aid scheme

operated by Pobal on behalf of my Department between 2005 and 2013, under which some 45 Community-based CCTV systems were established operating in a mix of urban and rural environments. However, both the application process and documentation were updated and streamlined as compared to the previous scheme, to make them more user-friendly. Support and guidance is also available to interested groups from my Department.

I am very conscious of the value that communities, especially rural communities, place on CCTV as a means of deterring crime and assisting in the detection of offenders and I would encourage interested groups to avail of the scheme. Full details of the grant aid package are available to download from my Department's website - www.justice.ie. In addition, my officials are available to provide assistance and guidance to any interested party, with a dedicated email address available for that purpose - communitycctv@justice.ie.

Home Repossessions Rate

284. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of proceedings outstanding in the Circuit Court for repossession of family homes by the year in which they were initiated; the number listed for hearing; the number that are adjourned; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23433/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy is aware, under the provisions of the Courts Service Act 1998, management of the courts is the responsibility of the Courts Service, which is independent in exercising its functions, which include the provision of information on the courts system.

However, in order to be of assistance to the Deputy, I have had enquiries made and the Courts Service has informed me that court statistics and information are not compiled in such a way as to provide the detail sought by the Deputy. In order to provide the information sought it would involve a trawl of documentation for each court and require a disproportionate amount of staff time and resources to collate the data requested.

However, the Courts Service has advised that it would be in position to provide figures in relation to the number of proceedings lodged; the number of proceedings dealt with; and the number of adjournments granted for any timeframe that the Deputy might request, although please note that the figures for 2018 are not yet available.

Money Laundering

285. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to introduce or extend existing anti-money laundering regulations to those companies providing secretarial services or independent trust and corporate services providers which are used to hide beneficial ownership of many companies; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23487/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): Companies providing secretarial services or independent trust and corporate services providers are considered 'designated persons' under Section 25(1)(e) of the Criminal Justice (Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing) Act 2010, as amended, and are therefore subject to anti-money laundering regulations. The 2010 Act obliges specific types of business to conduct customer due diligence (CDD) on their customers so as to satisfy themselves as to the true identity of the customer and the source of the funds being used by the customer, and to report any suspicions to An Garda Síochána and the Revenue (Suspicious Transaction Report or STR).

Designated persons will be subject to further obligations with the enactment of the Criminal Justice (Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing) Act 2018 which is currently at second stage in the Houses of the Oireachtas. This Act will transpose the 4th EU Money Laundering Directive which imposes additional requirements on designated persons, in particular, to assess the risk of money laundering and terrorist financing and ensure policies are in place to mitigate the assessed risk.

Peace Commissioners Data

286. **Deputy Declan Breathnach** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the names and districts of peace commissioners in County Louth in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23495/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I wish to advise the Deputy that Peace Commissioner records are appointment-based and they do not always reflect the actual situation on the ground because the Department is reliant on the Peace Commissioners themselves, and other interested parties, to advise of changes which may occur subsequent to appointment e.g. death, retirement, inactivity or relocation.

While every effort is made to maintain an accurate record of active Peace Commissioners, individuals requesting their services are advised to contact local Gardaí, to ensure that a particular listed individual is active and available.

The names and Sub-Districts of all appointed Peace Commissioners held on file in County Louth are as follows:

Sub-Districts	Name
Ardee	Arthur, Michael
Ardee	Darcy, Owen
Ardee	Maguire, John
Ardee	Malone, Patrick
Ardee	Matthews, Frederick
Ardee	McKenny, Pádraig
Ardee	McMahon, James
Ardee	Melia, John
Ardee	Power, Joe
Blackrock	Cassidy, Sean
Blackrock	McKeown, James
Blackrock	Rocks, Eddie
Blackrock	Smyth, Dominic
Blackrock	Watters, John
Carlingford	Brady, Joseph
Carlingford	Campbell, James
Carlingford	Connolly, Sean
Carlingford	Finegan, Georgina
Carlingford	McKevitt, Stephen
Carlingford	Murnaghan, Bernard Joseph
Carlingford	Roddy, Patrick J.

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Sub-Districts	Name
Carlingford	Savage, Desmond
Carlingford	Thornton, Eamon Sean
Carlingford	Thornton, James
Carlingford	Woods, Owen Vivian
Castlebellingham	Lynch, James
Castlebellingham	Mahapatra, Dilip Narayan
Castlebellingham	McGrory, Thomas
Castlebellingham	McKeever, Patrick G.
Castlebellingham	Ó Caoilte, Seosamh Gearóid
Castlebellingham	Reilly, Tommy
Clogherhead	Kirwan, Anthony
Collon	Devine, Bernard
Collon	Duffin, Kay
Collon	Geraghty, Carmel
Collon	Geraghty, Maura
Collon	McCarthy, Jeremiah
Drogheda	Bell, Paul
Drogheda	Bohan, Cormac
Drogheda	Cheevers, Richard
Drogheda	Clarke, Carmel
Drogheda	Colville, Joseph
Drogheda	Coyle, Michael N.
Drogheda	Cunningham, Anthony
Drogheda	Dunne, Elizabeth Marie
Drogheda	Gavin, Edward
Drogheda	Gibney, Joseph
Drogheda	Govern, Peter J.
Drogheda	Higgins, Michael
Drogheda	Mac Raghnaill, Donnchadha
Drogheda	Maher, Francis N.
Drogheda	Marley, Michael
Drogheda	Martin, Damien
Drogheda	McCormack, Seán
Drogheda	McCullough, Patrick
Drogheda	McGrath, Redvers
Drogheda	McKenna, Bernard
Drogheda	Murphy, Jacinta
Drogheda	Murphy, Thomas
Drogheda	Quinn, Desmond
Drogheda	Sweeney, Eamon
Drogheda	White, Ray
Dromad	Cummiskey, James
Dromad	Flynn, Thomas
Dromad	McArdle, Seamus

Sub-Districts	Name
Dromad	Noonan, Patrick J.
Dromad	Weherley, John
Dundalk	Brennan, Martin B.
Dundalk	Callan, Patrick
Dundalk	Campbell, Patrick Pearse Marie
Dundalk	Carney, Francis
Dundalk	Carney, Frank
Dundalk	Casey, Desmond C.
Dundalk	Darcy, Thomas
Dundalk	Gallagher, Joseph
Dundalk	Gover, Gerard A.
Dundalk	Martin, Stephen
Dundalk	McQuaid, Brendan
Dundalk	Meehan, John
Dundalk	O'Callaghan, Dermot
Dundalk	O'Hanrahan, Pearse
Dundalk	O'Neill, Brian
Dundalk	Reilly, Henry
Dundalk	Ryan, Seán
Dundalk	Teather, Gerard
Dundalk	Temple, Martin A.
Dundalk	Watters, Francis
Dunleer	Clare, Thomas
Dunleer	McGuinness, James Joseph
Hackballscross	Gogarty, Maureen
Hackballscross	Quinn, Owen Joseph
Louth	Caulfield, Eugene
Louth	Faul, James J.
Louth	Hatrick, Leonard John
Louth	Keenan, Patrick
Louth	Kirk, John
Louth	Neasy, Dympna
Louth	Sharkey, Paddy
Louth	Sharkey, Thomas
Omeath	Elmore, John
Omeath	Ward, Philip

Cyberbullying Issues

287. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if the need to amend section 5 of the Non-Fatal Offences Against the Person Act 1997 has been examined in order to include cyberbullying; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23496/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will be aware, the Law Reform Commission produced a report on Harmful Communications and Digi-

tal Safety in September 2016. This report contained a number of recommendations to improve the criminal justice and regulatory response to harm perpetrated online. There is a growing concern around the whole area of online harm, which can include cyber-bullying and other behaviours such as distributing intimate images without consent. It was intended that my Department would bring forward legislation to give effect to the criminal law aspects of that report. However, due to competing legislative priorities, progress was not as rapid as I had hoped.

In 2017, Deputy Howlin introduced a Private Member's Bill to address the same issues outlined in the 2016 LRC report. The Harassment, Harmful Communications and Related Offences Bill completed second stage in the Dáil in January 2018 and was not opposed by Government. Cabinet approval was recently given to discontinue work on the Government Bill and to support Deputy Howlin's Bill to ensure that legislation can be enacted as swiftly as possible. The main provisions of the Bill as published include:

- A new offence of non-consensual distribution of intimate images with/without intent to cause harm or distress (generally referred to as "revenge pornography"). This will also be a sexual offence for the purpose of the Sex Offenders Act 2001, if an individual convicted is sentenced to a term of imprisonment. Whether the person against whom the offence was committed is underage or unable to guard themselves from harm is intended to be an aggravating factor to be considered in sentencing for the offence of non-consensual distribution of an image.

- The existing offence of sending threatening or indecent messages will be extended to apply to all threatening, false indecent and obscene messages using any form of online or traditional method of communications.

- The existing offence of harassment as contained in section 10 of the Non-Fatal Offences Against the Person Act, 1997 will be extended to include all forms of communication, including through online or digital communications.

My officials will be meeting with Deputy Howlin in the coming weeks with the intention of bringing forward Government amendments to ensure the Bill can be safely enacted. Any further amendment to the Non-Fatal Offences Against the Person Act, 1997 will be considered at that juncture. It is hoped that the Bill can be enacted by the end of the year.

Judicial Appointments

288. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if barristers that are working outside of the Law Library as in-house counsel are eligible for appointment as judges; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23610/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): Judges are appointed by the President on the advice of the Government.

Eligibility for appointment to judicial office is as set out in paragraphs (1) to (3) below as regards ordinary judge of the District Court, ordinary judge of the Circuit Court, and ordinary judge of the Superior Courts.

As regards the offices of Chief Justice, and President of a Court, the Government must have regard first to serving judges.

The below mentioned laws make no distinction between members of the Bar of Ireland or otherwise. Nor do they specify in what capacity a barrister needs to have practised, be that in-house or otherwise.

The Judicial Appointments Commission Bill (section 32 of Bill No.71a of 2017) will amend the law in two related respects: First, it introduces a new measure whereby a judge of the District Court will qualify for appointment as a judge of the High Court. Second, it will enable a legal academic (as defined in the Bill), who, at the time of appointment, is a barrister or solicitor, and has practised as such for a continuous period of at least four years to qualify for appointment to judicial office, provided that, amongst other things, the person is at the time of appointment a barrister or solicitor.

(1) Ordinary Judge of the District Court

In accordance with section 29 of the Courts (Supplemental Provisions) Act, 1961, as amended by section 6 of the Courts and Court Officers Act, 2002, the following persons shall be qualified for appointment as a Judge of the District Court:

(a) a person who is in the time being a practising barrister or a practising solicitor of not less than ten years standing.

(b) a barrister or solicitor who actually practised his/her profession for not less than ten years, if for the time being s/he holds an office in respect of which it was, at the time of his/her appointment thereto, required by statute that every person appointed thereto should be or should have been:

(i) a practising solicitor

(ii) a practising barrister or solicitor.

Where a person has practised as a barrister and as a solicitor, such periods of practice may be aggregated and reckoned to satisfy the minimum practice requirements for appointment as a Judge.

(2) Ordinary Judge of the Circuit Court

Under section 17 of the Courts (Supplemental Provisions) Act, 1961, as amended by section 2(2) of the Courts Act, 1973, section 30 of the Courts and Court Officers Act, 1995, section 5 and 6 of the Court and Court Officers Act, 2002 and section 188 of the Personal Insolvency Act 2012, a person who is a practising barrister or practising solicitor of not less than 10 years standing is qualified for appointment as a Judge of the Circuit Court.

a) a Judge of the District Court is qualified for appointment as a Judge of the Circuit Court

b) a county registrar who practised as a barrister or a solicitor for not less than ten years before he or she was appointed to be a county registrar is qualified for appointment as a Judge of the Circuit Court.

c) a specialist judge of the Circuit Court is qualified for appointment as a judge of the Circuit Court.

d) where a person has practised as both a barrister and a solicitor, such periods of practice may be aggregated and reckoned to satisfy the minimum practice requirements for appointment as a judge.

(3) Ordinary Judge of the Superior Courts:

Section 5 of the Courts (Supplemental Provisions) Act, 1961, as amended by the Courts and Court Officers Act, 1995, the Courts and Court Officers Act, 2002 and the Court of Appeal Act, 2014, provides that the following persons shall be qualified for appointment as a Judge of the

Superior Courts:

(2) (a) Subject to paragraphs (b) and (c) of this subsection, a person shall be qualified for appointment as a judge of the Supreme Court, the Court of Appeal or the High Court if the person is for the time being a practising barrister or a practising solicitor of not less than 12 years' standing who has practised as a barrister or a solicitor for a continuous period of not less than 2 years immediately before such appointment.

(b) A person who—

(i) is or was at any time during the period of 2 years immediately before the appointment concerned—

(I) a judge of the Court of Justice of the European Communities,

(II) a judge of the Court of First Instance attached to that Court,

(III) an Advocate-General of the Court of Justice of the European Communities,

(IV) a judge of the European Court of Human Rights established under the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms done at Rome on the 4th day of November, 1950,

(V) a judge of the International Court of Justice established under the Charter of the United Nations,

(VI) a judge of the International Criminal Court established under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court done at Rome on the 17th day of July, 1998, upon the entry into force of that Statute,

(VII) a judge of an international tribunal within the meaning of section 2 of the International War Crimes Tribunals Act, 1998 ,

and

(ii) was a practising barrister or a practising solicitor before appointment to any of the offices referred to in subparagraph (i) of this paragraph,

shall be qualified for appointment as a judge of the Supreme Court, the Court of Appeal or the High Court.

(c) A judge of the Circuit Court who has served as such a judge for a period of not less than 2 years shall be qualified for appointment as a judge of the Supreme Court, the Court of Appeal or the High Court

(3) An ordinary judge of the Supreme Court shall be qualified for appointment as President of the High Court, President of the Court of Appeal or as Chief Justice.

(4) The President of the Court of Appeal shall be qualified for appointment as an ordinary judge of the Supreme Court or as Chief Justice.

(5) An ordinary judge of the Court of Appeal shall be qualified for appointment as an ordinary judge of the Supreme Court or as President of the High Court, President of the Court of Appeal or as Chief Justice.

(6) The President of the High Court shall be qualified for appointment as an ordinary judge of the Court of Appeal or of the Supreme Court or as President of the Court of Appeal or Chief

Justice.

(7) An ordinary judge of the High Court shall be qualified for appointment as an ordinary judge of the Court of Appeal or of the Supreme Court or as President of the High Court, President of the Court of Appeal or Chief Justice.

Garda Reports

289. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the actions that have been taken as a result of the 2012 Garda professional standards report into the Bray district, which found serious failings; when the actions were taken; the person that took the actions; if assurances will be given that the district is not operating in a similar fashion at present; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23644/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The information sought by the Deputy is currently not to hand. A request has been made to the Garda Commissioner and when the information is received I will write to the Deputy directly.

Urban Development

290. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if the attention of the land values reference committee has been drawn to the outstanding arbitration process holding up development at the town centre, Naas, County Kildare; the efforts likely to be made to address the issue in the near future; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23645/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy is aware, when the State compulsorily acquires land for public purposes and there is a dispute between the vendor and the purchaser regarding the amount of compensation which should be paid, the vendor may apply to the Land Values Reference Committee (comprising the Chief Justice, the President of the High Court and the President of the Society of Chartered Surveyors of Ireland) for the appointment of a Property Arbitrator to arbitrate on the amount to be paid.

In order to be of assistance to the Deputy, I have made enquiries and the Courts Service has informed me that the remit of the Land Value Reference Committee, established under the Acquisition of Land (Assessment of Compensation) Act 1919 and reconstituted under the Acquisition of Land (Reference Committee) Act 1925, is to appoint and maintain a panel of property arbitrators and to refer to that panel for arbitration the assessment of disputed claims for compensation arising under various statutory regimes authorising compulsory acquisition of land or rights relating to land. The Committee has no oversight function in respect of the property arbitrators. Furthermore neither the Courts Service nor my Department has any function in relation to the work programme of property arbitrators who are appointed by the Land Values Reference Committee.

The Courts Service has further informed me that there is currently one full-time property arbitrator and seven temporary part-time arbitrators available to be nominated to act in cases in which the property arbitrator is unable to act and that the Courts Service is satisfied that this is sufficient to meet the demand for services in this area.

Garda Oversight

291. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the progress which has been made in terms of implementing a statutory power in order to facilitate unannounced visits by the Garda Síochána Inspectorate to Garda stations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23648/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): In November 2017, the Garda Síochána Inspectorate made a submission to the Commission on the Future of Policing in Ireland. Within this submission the Inspectorate state that a power to carry out unannounced visits to Garda stations would be helpful in carrying out their functions.

They go on to note that unannounced visits would enable the Inspectorate to examine high-risk areas in real time, obtain a more accurate reflection of current practices and undertake time-critical inspection work. Furthermore, the Inspectorate state in their submission that such a power would also be necessary should the Inspectorate become a designated body for the purpose of inspecting Garda places of detention or Garda custody areas.

The functions of the Garda Inspectorate, as set out in the Garda Síochána Act 2005, as amended, gives it the power to carry out, if it considers it appropriate to do so, inspections or inquiries in relation to any particular aspects of the operation and administration of the Garda Síochána. In accordance with section 118 of the Garda Síochána Act 2005 (as amended) the Inspectorate has agreed protocols with An Garda Síochána relating to co-operation matters.

As the Deputy will be aware the Commission on the Future of Policing in Ireland is undertaking a comprehensive examination of all aspects of policing including the full range of bodies that have a role in providing oversight and accountability for their activities; the Policing Authority, the Garda Inspectorate, the Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission, the Department and Government.

Up to the end of March 2018 the Commission had received 317 submissions, carried out 36 formal Commission meetings, held 11 public events, visited 19 stations and held over 100 bi-lateral meetings.

The Commission is due to report in September. Their report will inform policy in relation to all matters affecting An Garda Síochána, including the role and functions of the Garda Inspectorate and I propose to await the Commission's Report before considering any further changes to the legislation.

Garda Oversight

292. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the progress which has been regarding reform of legislation to ensure that the Garda Síochána Inspectorate has the legislative power to initiate its own work; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23649/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): Section 53 of the Garda Síochána (Policing Authority and Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2015 amended section 117(2) of the Garda Síochána Act 2005 in relation to the functions of the Garda Síochána Inspectorate. The key reform in relation to the Inspectorate's own functions was to allow it, at its own initiative, to carry out inspections or inquiries in relation to any particular aspect of the operation and administration of the Garda Síochána. Prior to this, it could only do so, either at the request of, or with the consent of, the Minister.

Insofar as any further changes in the functions of the Inspectorate are concerned, the Deputy will be aware that the Commission on the Future of Policing in Ireland is due to report in Sep-

tember and in the circumstances, I believe that it is best to await the publication of its Report before considering any further changes to the legislation.

Human Rights

293. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the progress made in terms of the implementation of the OPCAT protocol; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23650/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy is probably aware, the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission launched research into the implementation of the Optional Protocol against Torture (OPCAT) in Ireland last October. This report outlined the Commission's position on what should be the primary considerations for the State in making progress towards ratification and implementation of the OPCAT, including recommendations in respect of the designation and coordination of a national preventative mechanism (NPM) under OPCAT.

Earlier this year, having considered this research, my Department circulated the IHREC's research to relevant stakeholders for their comments and observations. Observations were sought in particular on the following:

whether existing sectoral authorities could carry out OPCAT inspections;

using an expanded office of the Inspector of Prisons to deal with OPCAT inspections in the Justice Sector (Office of Inspection of Places of Detention);

what role/relationship could such an office have with existing agencies;

could any existing agencies carry out OPCAT type inspections on behalf of an Office of Inspection of Places of Detention;

using this expanded Office of Inspection of Places of Detention to act as a co-ordinating NPM;

any views on how agencies could interact with the co-ordinating NPM for OPCAT.

These stakeholders comprised those organisations with policy or operational responsibility in respect of inspection arrangements across the ambit of the NPM regime provided for in OPCAT as well as advisory and advocacy organisations which have expressed an interest in the ratification of OPCAT.

These stakeholders included:

- Department of Health
- Department of Defence
- Department of Children and Youth Affairs
- Garda Inspectorate
- Irish Penal Reform Trust
- The Children's Ombudsman
- PRILA (Research project on Prisons: the rule of law, accountability and rights)

- Irish Council for Civil Liberties
- Inspector of Prisons
- SAGE (Support and Advocacy Service for Older People)
- IHREC

The last of these submissions was received in April 2018 and my Department is now in the process of considering them. Following this process which is expected to conclude during the summer, my officials will be meeting with a number of stakeholders including the newly appointed Inspector of Prisons. These meetings will help my Department develop further a policy position for agreement and will ultimately inform the development of legislative proposals to enable ratification of OPCAT.

Statutory Instruments

294. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when a statutory instrument to address the code of practice for mediators will be implemented; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23652/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The position is that section 9 of the Mediation Act 2017 provides that the Minister shall prepare and publish a code of practice to set standards for the conduct of mediations or approve a code prepared by a person other than the Minister. I can confirm that work on the preparation of such a code is under way at present.

Section 9 of the 2017 Act also provides that, prior to the publication or approval of a code of practice, a public consultation process must be carried out. In the coming weeks, I intend to publish the draft code on my Department's website and to invite submissions from stakeholders and other interested parties. Under the Act's provisions, the consultation process will be in place for a period of 30 days. I want to take this opportunity to urge all those with an interest in mediation to use the consultation process to submit their views on the content of the draft code.

Following completion of the consultation process, the content of the draft code will be reviewed in light of submissions received and finalised. My intention is to bring the code into operation as soon as practicable thereafter.

Child Abuse Prevention

295. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if discussions have taken place in terms of synchronising or streamlining the contact between the differing number of Garda and Tusla divisions in relation to dealing with cases of child abuse in view of the recommendation by the Garda Síochána Inspectorate; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23653/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): At the time of publication of the Garda Inspectorate's follow up report "Responding to Child Sexual Abuse" in December 2017, a revised protocol between Tusla and An Garda Síochána was at draft stage, pending formal agreement.

I am pleased to advise that the Children First Joint Working Protocol for An Garda Síochána

chána/Tusla - Child and Family Agency Liaison was published earlier this year to reflect the provisions in the new Children First Act 2015 and is available online at www.garda.ie and www.tusla.ie. Section 10 of the protocol outlines the structures and arrangements for liaison between An Garda Síochána and Tusla at Local Area office and Garda district levels as well as the national structures that are in place.

I can also advise the Deputy that in accordance with the Government's decision dated 27 February 2018, an independently Chaired inter-agency Implementation Group has been established to oversee the implementation of recommendations in the Garda Inspectorate's 2017 report. Members of the Implementation Group include senior officials from my Department, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, Department of Communications, Climate and Environment, Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, Tusla and An Garda Síochána. It is anticipated that the Implementation Group will operate for an initial period of 12 months from the date of its first meeting in mid-June 2018 and will report on a quarterly basis to the Cabinet Committee on Social Policy and Public Services.

Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service Administration

296. **Deputy Peter Fitzpatrick** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if a response will issue in relation to a GNIB card for a person (details supplied) being frozen; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23676/18]

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 referred to by the Deputy entered the State by way of a D-Join Family Visa as the de facto partner of an Irish National and was granted permission to remain at her local GNIB office on that basis. As the person concerned has been registered as the de facto partner of an Irish national, the fee to acquire an Irish Residency Permit is payable.

Irish law does not recognise polygamous marriages, therefore, the marriage which was contracted on 14 October 2010 is not recognised under Irish law as the Irish national was not free to marry at that time.

Details in relation to making an application for renewal of permission on the basis of a de facto relationship to an Irish National are available at www.inis.gov.ie/en/INIS/Pages/registration-renew-irish-defacto.

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 Code of Ethics

297. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if there are two different ethics training programmes being conducted internally in An Garda Síochána for rank and file members and management, respectively; his views on whether this is appropriate in view of the apparent void between both that is outlined in the recent Garda Cultural Audit Report; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23682/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Code of Ethics was launched by the Policing Authority in conjunction with the Commissioner in January 2017. Embedding the Code of Ethics throughout An Garda Síochána is a commitment under the Policing Plan for 2018. As the Deputy will appreciate the provision of training on ethical service provision is key to fulfilling this commitment. In this regard, I am informed by the Garda Commissioner that Acorn Solutions was appointed following a tendering process to assist in the provision of appropriate training. Acorn Solutions designed and developed the Code of Ethics Workshop Programme in conjunction with a wide range of administrative and operational ranks and grades within the organisation and were supported by an advisory group of ethics experts within An Garda Síochána.

I am further informed that the workshops have been designed to examine the nine principles and standards of the Code of Ethics in the context of the specific experience of participants. The workshops are highly discursive and interaction based, and participants are invited to share their personal and professional experiences. As such, the workshops are divided into two cohorts, one which includes all ranks and grades up to Inspector and Assistant Principal, and another including ranks and grades from Superintendent and Principal Officer upwards. I understand that this approach is intended to ensure that experiences shared are relevant to the participants albeit that the same programme is being delivered to all personnel. As of the end of March 2017 some 3,300 personnel had received training.

In so far as the Cultural Audit of An Garda Síochána published earlier this month is concerned, I have discussed its findings and recommendations with the senior leadership team. They are, as advised in the report itself, taking a short period of time to consider the findings and recommendations with a view to bringing forward specific actions before the Autumn. It will be important that the findings inform the development of initiatives across the board in An Garda Síochána and I am assured that they will be taken into account in the design of further initiatives aimed at embedding the Code of Ethics in the organisation.

Crime Levels

298. **Deputy Michael Harty** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if serious crime is on the rise in County Clare in view of comments by a judge at Ennis Circuit Criminal Court that extra sittings are needed to deal with the increasing number of criminal cases; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23693/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Deputy will appreciate that the Courts are independent, subject only to the Constitution and law, and it would be inappropriate for me to comment on any statements made by a Judge during particular court proceedings. Furthermore, it is a matter for the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) to decide whether or not a person should be prosecuted and for what crime.

The Deputy will be aware that it is that the Garda Commissioner and his management team who are responsible for the distribution of all Garda resources, including personnel, in the State and the Government has no direct role in the matter. However, I am advised by the Garda authorities that An Garda Síochána keep the distribution of these resources under continuous review in the context of crime trends and policing priorities so as to ensure that the optimum use is made of these resources, including Garda resources in Co. Clare.

While both An Garda Síochána and the Government are committed to tackling rural crime, it is perhaps worth noting that the latest recorded crime statistics from the Central Statistics Office (CSO), indicate reductions in a number of the main crime categories in the Clare Garda

Division. For example, burglary, theft and public order offences have seen decreases of 18%, 2% and 10% in 2017 when compared to the same period in 2016. These decreases coincide with Garda Operation Thor which was set up in 2015 to tackle property-related crime in all rural and urban communities across Ireland.

The most readily available figures for Operation Thor (up to 17th May, 2018), indicated that there have been:

- 7,569 arrests made;
- 8,613 charges brought;
- 32,435 searches carried out;
- 151,819 Thor related patrols;
- 130,702 checkpoints; and
- 90,616 intelligence reports generated.

For its part, the Government remains totally committed to ensuring An Garda Síochána have all the necessary resources to tackle all forms of criminality in our society, which includes actions taken under Operation Thor. Indeed, 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. €98.5m has been provided for Garda overtime for 2018 which represents an increase of €10 million over the initial allocation for 2017 (which amounted to €88.5 million). In November 2017, the Minister for Justice and Equality secured a supplementary estimate of some €42 million for Garda overtime, bringing the spend for 2017 to over €130 million. This compares to a spend in previous years of €91 million in 2016, €56 million in 2015 and some €37.7 million in 2014.

Closed-Circuit Television Systems Provision

299. **Deputy Michael Harty** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to make the application process for installing crime preventing CCTV systems less arduous in view of the fact that the take-up for the scheme to date has been small; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23694/18]

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 community-based CCTV grant-aid scheme was launched by my Department in 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 €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.

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. Indeed I would further point out that some 45 community CCTV schemes were successfully established within this same legal framework between 2005 and 2013, with the support of the grant aid scheme administered by Pobal on behalf of the Department.

While fully respecting the statutory requirements necessary for CCTV systems and the need for protection of public funds, the Department of course wishes to utilise as simple and user-friendly an application process as possible in relation to the grant-aid available.

With this objective in mind, the application process and associated documentation for the current scheme were updated and streamlined by my Department, as compared to the previous scheme.

Further, and again in the interests of avoiding any obstacles to uptake, in establishing the grant-aid scheme, the Department consulted broadly including with the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner, An Garda Síochána and the Office of the Attorney General. There was also consultation regarding the scheme with stakeholders including County and City Management Association (CCMA), Local Government Management Agency (LGMA), Irish Rural Link as well as interested community groups. In addition, support and guidance remains available from officials in my Department for any interested groups, should that be helpful in considering submitting an application to the scheme.

I am very keen to ensure that all interested groups, in both rural and urban areas, take advantage of the availability of this scheme. With funding of some €1 million available for each year of the scheme, there is room for a greater number of applications than we have seen to date. My Department is ready and willing to guide interested groups through the application process and I encourage any interested groups to make contact with my Department for assistance. A dedicated email address is available for that purpose – communitycctv@justice.ie - and full details of the grant aid package are also available to download from my Department's website www.justice.ie.

Motor Insurance Fraud

300. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the progress he and the motor insurance working group have made in the establishment of an anti-fraud unit within An Garda Síochána in order to reduce insurance fraud and uninsured driving; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23710/18]

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

The Garda National Economic Crime Bureau (GNECB) has engaged with Insurance Ire-

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

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

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

Prisoner Data

301. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of adult prisoners that select on a daily basis to be held in single separation by prison in March 2015 to 2017 and to date in 2018, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23740/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by my officials in the Irish Prison Service that data in relation to the number of prisoners who are placed on a restricted regime at their own request is not collated in the exact format requested. However the statistics concerning prisoners on restricted regimes are collated by the Irish Prison Service Statistics Unit for publication quarterly on its website (www.irishprisons.ie). The information can be found in the Information Centre – under Statistics & Information – Census Reports.

Under Rule 63 of the Prison Rules 2007 a prisoner may, either at his/her own request or when the Governor considers it necessary, in so far as is practicable and subject to the maintenance and good order and safe and secure custody, be kept separate from other prisoners who are reasonably likely to cause significant harm to him/her.

The fact that prisoners seeking protection are immediately separated for the general population or from specific prisoners identified as presenting a threat, clearly demonstrates the commitment of the Irish Prison Service to ensure their safety and security. If possible, prisoners can be transferred to other institutions where a restricted regime would not be necessary.

The Prison Rules 2007 provide that the imposition of a restricted regime is closely monitored by the Irish Prison Service and the status of each prisoner on restricted regime within the prison system is regularly reviewed.

Prisoner Data

302. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of prisoners on a restricted regime as of 23 May 2018 by prison; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23745/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by my officials in the Irish Prison Service that data in relation to the number of prisoners on a restricted regime is collated in the census on a quarterly basis and therefore the data is not available for the date requested. The last census available is April 2018.

The statistics concerning prisoners on restricted regimes are available on the Irish Prison Service website www.irishprisons.ie, under Information Centre – Statistics & Information – Census Reports.

Prisoner Data

303. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the length of time prisoners were held on restricted regime by time period (details supplied) by prison; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23746/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by my officials in the Irish Prison Service (IPS) that data in relation to the length of time individual prisoners were held on a restricted regime is not collated in the format requested by the Deputy. However, the data is available in the format outlined in the table below:

April 2018 Census

Prison	0<10 days	11<20 days	21<50 days	51<100 days	101<200 days	201<365 days	1yr+	Total
Arbour Hill	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Castlerea	8	9	4	11	3	1	0	36
Cloverhill	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	9
Cork	1	4	19	7	3	1	3	38
Dochas	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Limerick*	5	9	16	16	21	14	4	85
Loughan House**	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Midlands	11	5	7	8	9	7	2	49
Mountjoy (M)	9	17	47	43	48	29	29	222
Portlaoise	0	0	6	0	1	0	3	10
Shelton Abbey**	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Wheatfield	24	1	6	7	11	11	15	75
Totals	67	45	105	92	96	63	56	524

The restriction of a prisoner's regime can occur due to a number of factors including, the protection of vulnerable prisoners. This is provided for under Rule 63 of the Prison Rules 2007. A prisoner may, either at his/her own request or when the Governor considers it necessary, in so far as is practicable and subject to the maintenance and good order and safe and secure custody, be kept separate from other prisoners who are reasonably likely to cause significant harm to him/her.

In addition, the Governor may decide, for the maintenance of good order in the prison, to remove a prisoner from general association or structured activity to reduce the negative effect that a prisoner or prisoners may have on the general population. This is provided for under Rule 62 of the Prison Rules 2007.

The Prison Rules 2007 provide that the imposition of a restricted regime is closely monitored by the IPS and the status of each prisoner on restricted regime within the prison system is regularly reviewed.

Garda Data

304. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of personnel in each Garda district by category as of 30 April 2015, 2016 and 2017, in tabular form. [23750/18]

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.

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 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.

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. 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.

I am informed that the detail of the number of Gardaí and resources allocated to the Armed Support Units is deemed to be operationally sensitive and cannot be disclosed for security reasons.

For the Deputy's information I have set out in the attached tables the strength of each Station, District and Division for the years 2015-2017 and as of 30 April 2018. I am advised by the Commissioner that the information sought by the Deputy as it relates to specific units is not readily available by District. In order to be of assistance, I have provided information by Division for the years 2015-2017 and as of 30 April 2018. I have requested the information sought on the number of Gardaí assigned to the Garda Mountain Bike and Mounted Units from the Commissioner and I will revert to the Deputy once this information is to hand.

Garda Reserve 2015 – 2018

DIVISION	2015	2016	2017	2018*
Waterford	32	24	19	19
Wexford	37	22	18	17
Kilkenny/Carlow	34	26	26	26
Tipperary	28	23	17	16
Cork North	24	16	13	12
Cork City	65	48	42	42
Cork West	23	12	10	8
Kerry	31	21	20	20
Limerick	53	36	29	27
Donegal	27	21	16	14
Cavan/Monaghan	19	14	11	11
Sligo/Leitrim	27	21	17	17
Louth	41	33	25	24
Clare	8	7	6	6
Mayo	32	23	20	19
Galway	43	36	31	31
Roscommon/Longford	11	11	9	7
Westmeath	20	13	13	12
Meath	33	18	16	16
Kildare	30	22	20	19
Laois/Offaly	24	19	17	16
Wicklow	24	21	20	20
DMR East	19	15	10	8
DMR North	57	49	45	42
DMR North Central	59	42	36	35
DMR South	35	26	20	17
DMR South Central	66	48	37	35
DMR West	51	28	26	26

DIVISION	2015	2016	2017	2018*
TOTAL	953	695	589	562

*As of 30 April 2018

Detective Strength 2015 - 2018

DIVISION	2015	2016	2017	2018*
D.M.R. EAST	24	22	21	20
D.M.R. NORTH	44	36	35	36
D.M.R. NORTH CENTRAL	41	34	30	34
D.M.R. SOUTH	49	40	31	30
D.M.R. SOUTH CENTRAL	40	37	32	31
D.M.R. WEST	51	42	62	59
KILDARE	22	23	27	26
LAOIS / OF- FALY	28	25	26	26
MEATH	18	16	16	16
WESTMEATH	15	19	20	21
WICKLOW	16	15	31	30
CAVAN / MONAGHAN	29	28	27	30
DONEGAL	36	32	31	32
LOUTH	29	25	30	29
SLIGO / LEITRIM	22	20	26	25
KILKENNY/ CARLOW	19	20	20	19
TIPPERARY	22	19	23	23
WATERFORD	28	28	26	27
WEXFORD	22	21	20	20
CORK CITY	90	81	123	122
CORK NORTH	19	14	28	27
CORK WEST	19	17	26	28
KERRY	30	27	27	32
LIMERICK	61	53	62	61
CLARE	40	33	35	34
GALWAY	48	43	54	53
MAYO	19	17	20	20
ROSCOMMON / LONGFORD	18	14	18	18
TOTAL	899	801	927	929

*As of 30 April 2018

Traffic Corp 2015 - 2018

Questions - Written Answers

DIVISION	2015	2016	2017	2018*
D.M.R. EAST	14	9	9	12
D.M.R. NORTH	17	13	14	14
D.M.R. NORTH CENTRAL	18	17	18	18
D.M.R. SOUTH	12	12	10	10
D.M.R. SOUTH CENTRAL	16	11	7	6
D.M.R. WEST	16	13	12	18
D.M.R. TRAFFIC	118	107	101	106
KILDARE	34	25	24	27
LAOIS / OFFALY	25	22	19	22
LOUTH / MEATH	0	0	0	0
MEATH	16	17	14	16
WESTMEATH	20	28	18	18
WICKLOW	21	17	16	19
CAVAN / MONAGHAN	25	25	18	23
DONEGAL	27	20	20	21
LOUTH	16	14	14	18
SLIGO / LEITRIM	24	23	23	22
KILKENNY/ CARLOW	28	26	26	22
TIPPERARY	21	21	21	26
WATERFORD	14	14	13	13
WEXFORD	14	15	13	15
CORK CITY	36	39	37	38
CORK NORTH	33	33	33	33
CORK WEST	18	22	21	22
KERRY	18	17	18	24
LIMERICK	26	23	24	24
CLARE	18	17	15	19
GALWAY	41	39	37	37
MAYO	11	11	11	16
ROSCOMMON / LONGFORD	19	19	17	20
TOTAL	716	669	623	679

* As of 30 April 2018

Divisional Drug Unit Personnel 2015 - 2018

Division	2015	2016	2017	2018*
D.M.R.S.C.	19	13	9	9

Division	2015	2016	2017	2018*
D.M.R.N.C	20	30	14	14
D.M.R.N.	25	21	19	19
D.M.R.E.	10	9	11	11
D.M.R.S.	16	17	14	16
D.M.R.W.	26	20	17	17
Waterford	5	5	6	6
Wexford	6	6	5	5
Kilkenny/Carlow	7	4	5	5
Tipperary	8	9	12	11
Cork City	15	20	17	15
Cork North	5	5	5	5
Cork West	4	3	5	6
Kerry	9	7	9	10
Limerick	14	12	11	8
Donegal	7	4	4	4
Cavan/Monaghan	0	0	5	6
Sligo/Leitrim	7	7	14	4
Louth	6	6	5	4
Clare	5	5	5	4
Mayo	5	5	6	6
Galway	12	9	9	9
Roscommon/Longford	6	6	4	3
Westmeath	5	6	6	6
Meath	5	8	5	5
Kildare	7	8	9	11
Laois/Offaly	0	0	5	5
Wicklow	4	11	0	0
Total	258	256	236	224

*As of 30 April 2018

Community Gardaí 2015 - 2018

DIVISION	2015	2016	2017	2018*
D.M.R. EAST	30	32	34	32
D.M.R. NORTH	58	53	47	51
D.M.R. NORTH CENTRAL	121	110	90	96
D.M.R. SOUTH	53	39	40	48
D.M.R. SOUTH CENTRAL	38	34	30	31
D.M.R. WEST	63	53	64	68
KILDARE	0	0	4	4

DIVISION	2015	2016	2017	2018*
LAOIS / OF-FALY	4	2	2	2
MEATH	8	9	7	8
WESTMEATH	9	10	8	11
WICKLOW	18	14	14	13
CAVAN / MONAGHAN	5	4	2	2
DONEGAL	24	2	2	2
LOUTH	16	15	12	11
SLIGO / LEITRIM	9	8	6	6
KILKENNY/ CARLOW	90	88	85	106
TIPPERARY	77	71	68	73
WATERFORD	44	44	35	35
WEXFORD	8	8	7	6
CORK CITY	24	26	27	28
CORK NORTH	6	8	6	5
CORK WEST	4	6	4	4
KERRY	7	7	9	9
LIMERICK	58	42	38	36
CLARE	6	7	8	8
GALWAY	14	14	14	14
MAYO	3	3	3	3
ROSCOMMON / LONGFORD	9	10	10	10
TOTAL	806	719	676	722

*As of 30 April 2018

[GARDA STATISTICS BY DIVISION AND DISTRICT]

Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service Administration

305. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the details of the immigration arrangements including visa options for persons in Venezuela that wish to move here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23758/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that Venezuelan nationals are required to obtain a visa in order to travel to Ireland. A visa required person, including Venezuelan nationals, must apply for a visa for the particular purpose of their visit.

I am further advised that any person who wishes to come to Ireland must fulfil the relevant criteria for the particular visa application, i.e. study, employment, join family, volunteer, Minister of Religion, etc. The onus rests at all times with the applicant to satisfy the Visa Officer

that the visa sought should be granted.

On arrival at an Irish port the visitor must report to an Immigration Officer and demonstrate that they have all the necessary documents required for their visit. The Immigration Officer may give a permission to the visitor to enter the country and to stay for a period up to a maximum of three months. Should the person wish to stay for longer than the period granted at border control they will be required to register for immigration at the relevant Immigration Office for the district in which they intend to reside.

The requirements set-out above are applicable to all visa required States. Full details of visa and immigration requirements are available on the INIS website.

Ministerial Transport

306. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of ministerial cars or vehicles in operation in each of the past six years; and the costs associated with same. [24034/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): In accordance with the arrangements for Ministerial transport agreed by Government in 2011, office-holder vehicles are provided from the overall Garda fleet for the President, Taoiseach, Tánaiste, Minister for Justice and Equality, Chief Justice and Director of Public Prosecutions.

As the Deputy will appreciate, management of the Garda fleet is a matter for the Garda Commissioner.

I have requested the relevant information, including costs, from the Garda Commissioner and will write to the Deputy when a report is received.

Competition and Consumer Protection Commission Staff

307. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of vacant posts in the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission; when these posts will be filled; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [23332/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): I understand that the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission currently has 10 vacant posts. Seven of these 10 vacancies are due to be advertised in the next 4 weeks and recruitment will begin as soon as practicable thereafter. The sanction to fill the other three posts has not yet been requested.

IDA Ireland Jobs Data

308. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of IDA supported jobs in each county; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [23691/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The Government is working hard to achieve the most even possible distribution of foreign direct investment across the country. IDA Ireland is focused on that same goal, with the Agency tar-

getting an increase of investment of 30%-40% in every region as part of its 2015-2019 strategy.

The Agency's 2017 results demonstrate that significant progress is being made towards these objectives, with 45% of all new IDA client company jobs created last year being outside Dublin. There are now over 122,000 people employed across 649 firms in IDA client companies outside the capital.

The table below provides a detailed breakdown by county of employment by IDA Ireland client companies for 2017. The figures for 2018 will not be available until my Department's Annual Employment Survey is carried out in November 2018.

\ County	Total Number of IDA supported jobs in 2017
Carlow	875
Cavan	1,155
Clare	6,775
Cork	35,248
Donegal	3,389
Dublin	88,318
Galway	17,696
Kerry	2,186
Kildare	9,282
Kilkenny	782
Laois	119
Leitrim	889
Limerick	10,677
Longford	474
Louth	3,702
Mayo	4,462
Meath	1,491
Monaghan	150
Offaly	940
Roscommon	1,128
Sligo	2,184
Tipperary	3,665
Waterford	6,850
Westmeath	2,794
Wexford	2,948
Wicklow	2,264
Grand Total	210,443

Ministerial Transport

309. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of ministerial cars or vehicles in operation in each of the past six years; and the costs

associated with same. [24027/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Since 1 May 2011 Cabinet Ministers, with the exception of An Taoiseach, An Tánaiste and the Minister for Justice and Equality, must use their own cars on official business. In that regard, I can confirm to the Deputy that neither I, nor my ministerial colleagues, Ministers Pat Breen and John Halligan are provided with a ministerial car from the Garda fleet.

We use our own personal cars for official business in line with the public financial rules as determined by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform's circulars in relation to travel arrangements for Ministers and Ministers of State.

I understand this was also the case for each of the six other Ministers and Ministers of State appointed to the Department since May 2011 which included Ministers Richard Bruton, Mary Mitchell O'Connor, Frances Fitzgerald, Ged Nash, Sean Sherlock and John Perry.

Prisoner Data

310. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Health the number of prisoners awaiting admittances to the Central Mental Hospital from various prisons by prison as of 23 May 2018, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23741/18]

311. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Health the number of female prisoners awaiting admittances to the Central Mental Hospital as of 23 May 2018 by prison, in tubular form; the way in which he plans to address the issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23743/18]

312. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Health the number of male prisoners awaiting admittance to the Central Mental Hospital as of 23 May 2018 by prison in tabular form; the way in which he plans to address issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23744/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 310 to 312, inclusive, together.

As these are service matters I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Question No. 313 answered with Question No. 108.

Hospital Appointments Status

314. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health if an appointment will be scheduled for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23101/18]

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 Health Service Executive (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.

Disability Services Funding

315. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Health if funding will be available to a group (details supplied); if so, when the funding will be made available; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23106/18]

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 Facilities

316. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the status of the development of a 25 bed mental health unit at Sligo University Hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23110/18]

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.

General Practitioner Services Provision

317. **Deputy Martin Kenny** asked the Minister for Health when the free general practitioner card for persons in receipt of carer's allowance will be introduced; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23111/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Government approval was given on April 11 2018 to provide GP services without charge to persons in receipt of Carer's Allowance or Carer's Benefit. Permission was also granted to draft the Heads of the Bill to legislate for this measure. The Heads of the Bill have been drafted and a Memorandum for Government will be submitted to the Cabinet meeting on June 06 2018 seeking approval of the Heads of the Bill and permission for their submission to the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel. It is intended that this measure will be implemented this year, subject to the drafting and enactment of the necessary legislation.

National Treatment Purchase Fund Eligibility

318. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Health if a person (details supplied) will be refunded for a cataract operation. [23121/18]

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 National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF) to provide treatment for patients.

The recently launched Inpatient/Day Case Action Plan outlines the combined impact of HSE and NTPF activity in 2018.

Under the Plan, the NTPF authorises public hospitals to offer outsourced treatment to clinically suitable long-waiting patients who are on an inpatient/day case waiting list for surgery, having been referred on to such a list following clinical assessment by a consultant/specialist at an outpatient clinic. NTPF authorisations are made in respect of the longest-waiting patients first.

Treatments such as the procedure referred to by the Deputy are provided to patients in public hospitals and also through the NTPF. There is no statutory scheme for the reimbursement by the public health system of the cost incurred by an individual for private healthcare carried out in Ireland.

Hospital Appointments Status

319. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health when a child (details supplied) in County Cork will have an assessment of need carried out; the position of the child on the waiting list; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23122/18]

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 Data

320. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons on the waiting list for the National Rehabilitation Hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23128/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose, and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government,

which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy's question relates to a service issue, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

Hospital Beds Data

321. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the number of beds in the National Rehabilitation Hospital; the number occupied, empty and closed, respectively; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23129/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose, and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy's question relates to a service issue, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

Hospitals Funding

322. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health if funding issues are causing beds at the National Rehabilitation Hospital to remain empty and not staffed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23130/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose, and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy's question relates to a service issue, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

Hospital Appointments Delays

323. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the case of a person (details supplied) who is waiting a significant amount of time for an appointment at Croom Hospital; the reason for the delay in obtaining the appointment; if an appointment will be expedited; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23135/18]

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 Health Service Executive (Governance)

Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The National Waiting List Management Policy, a standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, January 2014, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

Hospital Waiting Lists

324. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an operation for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23136/18]

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 Health Service Executive (Governance) Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The National Waiting List Management Policy, a standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, January 2014, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

Hospital Waiting Lists

325. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an operation for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23137/18]

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 Health Service Executive (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.

Health Services Staff Training

326. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Health the amount the HSE has spent on GDPR training to date by HSE area; and the cost by HSE area in tabular form. [23142/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is an operational matter, it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply to the Deputy.

Addiction Treatment Services

327. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Health if funding will be provided for a person (details supplied) who needs further residential treatment for substance addiction; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23147/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne): As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

General Practitioner Services

328. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the number of areas in County Wexford without a general practitioner; the position regarding these vacancies; when it is planned that such posts will be filled; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23151/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Mental Health Services Expenditure

329. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the underspend on mental health services within CHO1 when compared with the CHO's 2017 budget; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23152/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Mental Health Services Expenditure

330. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the underspend on mental health services within CHO2 when compared with the CHO's 2017 budget; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23153/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): As this is a service

matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Mental Health Services Expenditure

331. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the underspend on mental health services within CHO3 when compared with the CHO's 2017 budget; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23154/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Mental Health Services Expenditure

332. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the underspend on mental health services within CHO4 when compared with the CHO's 2017 budget; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23155/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Mental Health Services Expenditure

333. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the underspend on mental health services within CHO5 when compared with the CHO's 2017 budget; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23156/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Mental Health Services Expenditure

334. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the underspend on mental health services within CHO6 when compared with the CHO's 2017 budget; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23157/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Mental Health Services Expenditure

335. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the underspend on mental health services within CHO7 when compared with the CHO's 2017 budget; and if he will make a

statement on the matter. [23158/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Mental Health Services Expenditure

336. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the underspend on mental health services within CHO8 when compared with the CHO's 2017 budget; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23159/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Mental Health Services Expenditure

337. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the underspend on mental health services within CHO9 when compared with the CHO's 2017 budget; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23160/18]

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.

Commemorative Events

338. **Deputy Frank O'Rourke** asked the Minister for Health his plans to initiate a national day for the front-line emergency and security services in view of a request by a forum set up to advance the project (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23164/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Earlier this year, I met with the group referred to in the Deputy's question and was happy to support their proposal for a National Day to honour our frontline emergency and security services.

I understand that at a reception held in Dublin Castle last April to honour the work of the emergency services during Storm Emma, An Taoiseach announced that the first Saturday of every September will be National Frontline Services Day. Consideration will be given as to how the Government will mark the day in 2018.

Mental Health Commission Reports

339. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons detained here under the Mental Health Act 2001 in each of the years 2015, 2016 and 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23166/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): The Annual Report of the Mental Health Commission includes figures for the number of admission orders issued

each year. It should be noted that the figures published by the Commission relate to the number of admission orders issued rather than the number of people admitted on an involuntary basis.

The number of such orders issued in 2015 was 2,363 while the figure for 2016 was 2,414. The Commission's 2017 Annual Report has not yet been published, but I understand from the Commission that the relevant figure for 2017 is 2,337.

Primary Care Centres

340. **Deputy Noel Rock** asked the Minister for Health if he will request the HSE to issue a status update with regard to the Finglas primary care centre in view of the fact that the same response has been received since 2016 and the project has been promised since 2013. [23175/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): My Department has asked the Health Service Executive to provide the Deputy directly with the information requested in respect of Finglas Primary Care Centre.

Hospital Appointments Status

341. **Deputy Kevin O'Keeffe** 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. [23181/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The National Waiting List Management Policy, a standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, January 2014, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

Nursing Homes Support Scheme Administration

342. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health the payment mechanism in place for families that have recently lost a relative under the care of the fair deal scheme; if the balance on an account can be paid off in instalments when family land has been listed against the deceased patient; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23186/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): Where a resident under the Nursing Homes Support Scheme (NHSS) has assets including land or property, they may defer their contribution to care based on such assets under Ancillary State Support (also known as Nursing Home Loan). This contribution becomes payable on their death.

Collection and recovery of repayable amounts of the Ancillary State Support is a function of the Revenue Commissioners, acting as a collecting agent for the HSE. Where the HSE has advanced monies by way of Ancillary State Support it calculates the amount due in relation to such support and gives notice of that amount and particulars of how it is calculated to the relevant accountable person.

The HSE notifies Revenue of amounts that become due for collection and in all circumstances Revenue makes contact with the relevant person before any collection activity is initiated. Where there are personal or financial difficulties, Revenue will always work with the person, provided there is meaningful engagement. While there is no provision for instalment arrangements under Ancillary State Support, if the accountable person wishes to pay by instalment arrangement then these payments are accepted by Revenue. Late payment interest charges may apply in such circumstances. I would therefore urge family members of the deceased to engage directly with the Revenue Commissioners on this matter.

Health Care Professionals

343. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the number of whole-time equivalent psychological consultants in perinatal services in each hospital here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23187/18]

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.

Health Care Professionals

344. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the number of whole-time equivalent psychiatric consultants in perinatal services in each hospital here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23188/18]

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.

Substance Misuse

345. **Deputy Noel Rock** asked the Minister for Health his plans to address the issue of steroid abuse here; if punishing gym owners will be considered; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23189/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Anabolic steroids are synthetic versions of the male hormone testosterone. They have a number of physiological effects; growth of skeletal muscle and bone, and the growth and maintenance of the reproductive system. As such they are medicinal products and medicines containing anabolic steroids are subject to prescription control.

Under the Medicinal Products (Prescription and Control of Supply) Regulations 2003, as amended, it is prohibited for a person to supply prescription-only medicines, except in accordance with a prescription. The supply must be made from a registered pharmacy by, or under

the personal supervision of, a registered pharmacist. The mail order supply of prescription-only medicines is also prohibited. A person who contravenes these Regulations is guilty of an offence.

The inappropriate use of prescription-only medicines can cause significant harm. While a doctor may prescribe anabolic steroid containing medicines to treat specific medical conditions, the misuse of such drugs and their derivatives, for non-medical purposes, poses a significant risk to human health. In addition, prescription-only medicines that are supplied illegally, including anabolic steroids, have often been shown to be falsified and there can be no guarantee as to their safety, quality or efficacy.

In 2017 the Department of Health launched a new National Drugs Strategy. The new strategy “Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery - A health-led response to drug and alcohol use in Ireland 2017-2025” has committed to establishing a working group to examine the evidence in relation to current and emerging trends of drug use including the use of image and performance enhancing drugs (IPED), which includes anabolic steroids. This will be pursued by the HSE in conjunction with other relevant stakeholders during the term of the action plan of the strategy.

This action arose from reports by service providers of an increase in people who use IPED accessing the needle exchange programmes. However, these harm reduction services are traditionally geared toward users of psychoactive substances not IPED. Therefore, expanding the range and nature of models of practice may service to enhance accessibility, engagement and effectiveness for this at-risk group.

The Health Products Regulatory Authority (HPRA) is the Competent Authority for the implementation of EU and national legislation relating to medicines in Ireland. The Agency’s role includes monitoring and inspecting medicinal products on the market to ensure their safety, efficacy and legality.

One of HPRA’s roles is to investigate potential breaches of legislation and, where necessary, to take corrective action including legal proceedings. The HPRA works closely with Revenue’s Customs Service, An Garda Síochána and international enforcement agencies to prevent the unauthorised flow of illegal medicinal products, including anabolic steroids.

In 2017, the HPRA detained 449,411 anabolic steroid dosage units (tablets, capsules, vials, etc.), compared to 109,006 units detained in 2016. This reflects the impact of intelligence-led enforcement activity by the HPRA, acting in conjunction and in cooperation with Revenue’s Customs Service and An Garda Síochána. Another action in “Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery” provides for An Garda Síochána and Revenue Customs Service to invest in capacity building measures for the monitoring of online drug markets and prevent their use as a means of trafficking illegal drugs and other substances into Ireland.

The focus of the HPRA when investigating breaches of the legislation relating to medicines is on the supplier. Prosecutions have been initiated by the HPRA in relation to the unauthorised supply of anabolic steroid containing medicines. These prosecutions have included the offences of manufacturing, advertising and supply without prescription to individuals and for wholesale supply.

If any person, including those in control of gymnasias, is offering, facilitating the supply of, or supplying anabolic steroid containing medicines in breach of the legislation, they risk investigation by the HPRA and may face enforcement actions up to and including prosecution.

In addition to enforcement activities targeting the illegal supply of anabolic steroid containing medicines, the HPRA plans to launch a targeted information and education campaign later

this year to highlight to users of illegally supplied products the very significant health risks associated with taking anabolic steroids.

Psychological Services

346. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the number of children awaiting appointments for psychology services by county and age; and the length of time they have been waiting in tabular form. [23190/18]

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

347. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will be called for surgery in St. Vincent's University Hospital. [23191/18]

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.

Services for People with Disabilities

348. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Health the cost for the provision of an additional education officer for an organisation (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23194/18]

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.

Medical Card Data

349. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Health the average cost to provide a full medical card to a person; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23195/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The following table details the current average cost of a medical card by age cohorts which were contained in the HSE's Performance Report of April 2018 (latest available):

Age Group	Medical Card
0-4 years	€377
5-15 years	€224
16-44 years	€623
45-64 years	€1,229
65-69 years	€1,621
Aged 70 and over	€2,144

Primary Care Centres

350. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Health if concerns raised by a school (details supplied) will be addressed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23201/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As the HSE has responsibility for the provision, along with the maintenance and operation of Primary Care Centres and other Primary Care facilities, the Executive has been asked to reply directly to the Deputy.

Hospital Appointments Status

351. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) in County Clare will receive a hospital appointment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23203/18]

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.

Medical Qualifications

352. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the procedure to have qualifications recognised here in order that a person may work as a doctor such as in a case (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23210/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Medical Council is responsible for the registration of doctors in Ireland. The Medical Council considers applications for registration in accordance with the provisions of the Medical Practitioners Act 2007 and the EU Directive 2005/36/EC (amended). Under the provisions of the Medical Practitioners Act 2007, eligibility for registration is based on the applicant's medical credentials rather than their citizenship.

As the Medical Council is the regulator for doctors under legislation, I have no role in relation to registration procedures. Information and requirements on registration for doctors can be obtained from the Medical Council. It will be able to advise on requirements specific to the doctor's registration. The Council may be contacted at www.medicalcouncil.ie or by phone at 01 4983100.

Medical Aids and Appliances Provision

353. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Health the waiting times under the reimbursement scheme for FreeStyle Libre for type 1 diabetic children in County Waterford; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23222/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Under the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013, the HSE has statutory responsibility for the administration of the community drug schemes; therefore, the matter has been referred to the HSE for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

Hospital Beds Data

354. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Health the bed capacity of University Hospital Sligo in 2008; the bed capacity of the hospital at present; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23235/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

Drug and Alcohol Task Forces

355. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Health the resource capacity being allocated to implement the alcohol action plan strategy in drugs task forces, for example, in the CCLDATF [23236/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne): Drug and Alcohol Task Forces play a key role in assessing the extent and nature of the drug problem and in initiating appropriate responses, so that there is a coordinated approach involving all sectors to the problem of substance misuse in local communities.

I secured additional funding of €250,000 in Budget 2018 to improve the organisational effectiveness of task forces in implementing the national drugs strategy, Reducing Harm Supporting Recovery. It is intended that task forces can apply for up to €10,000 in additional funding,

on a once-off basis, in 2018 under this scheme. Task forces must submit applications for this additional funding by 11 June 2018.

The Department is developing a new programme to promote community awareness of alcohol-related harm. An additional €0.25m will be made available in 2018 to fund phase 1 of the scheme, with the expectation that this will increase to €1m in 2019. It is anticipated that the scheme will commence in the last quarter of 2018.

I strongly believe that resources should be directed towards interventions that are most effective in reducing problem substance use. Measuring the effectiveness of responses to the drug problem is therefore an important objective of public policy. Towards this end, my Department will develop a performance measurement system by 2020 which will improve accountability across all sectors, including the task forces.

Medical Card Eligibility

356. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health if medical card eligibility will be reviewed in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23238/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter I have referred it to the HSE for direct reply to the Deputy.

Hospital Staff Recruitment

357. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Health if a CNS post for multiple sclerosis has been filled at University Hospital Limerick, UHL, in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23248/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service issue, I have asked the HSE to reply to you directly.

Cancer Screening Programmes

358. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Health if an audit facility is in place under the BowelScreen programme; if not, the reason therefor; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23253/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): An audit facility is not in place in the BowelScreen programme. BowelScreen is relatively new, having been commenced in 2012.

A BowelScreen Quality Assurance Committee is in place and consists of experts drawn from the field of endoscopy, radiology, histopathology, surgery and programme operation and administration. This Committee provides continuous oversight of quality within the programme, which involves reviewing international standards, recommending best practice and monitoring and supporting adherence of the standards by service providers.

A range of Quality Assurance mechanisms and Key Performance Indicators are in place, including the analysis of the FIT kit/home test and, at hospital level, the auditing of individual performances of endoscopists who carry out the programme's colonoscopies.

The Terms of Reference of the Scoping Inquiry led by Dr Gabriel Scally include to examine the other screening programmes operated by the National Screening Service particularly in relation to quality assurance and clinical audit, open disclosure and governance. The outcome of the Scoping Inquiry will inform the further development of the BowelScreen programme.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services Data

359. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the number of children in each CHO area that were awaiting a child and adolescence mental health services, CAMHS, appointment for over one year in June 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23261/18]

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 Delays

360. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will receive an appointment for surgery; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23264/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The National Waiting List Management Policy, a standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, January 2014, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

Mental Health Services Data

361. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons using mental health services that are malnourished or identified to be at risk of malnutrition; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23266/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Mental Health Services Provision

362. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the actions being taken to mitigate against malnutrition in mental health patients; if his attention has been drawn to the impact that malnutrition has on the health and outcomes of these patients; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23267/18]

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.

Health Screening Programmes

363. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health his plans for the roll-out of a mandatory nutritional screening programme in the community setting; his views on the benefits of nutritional screening in the community setting; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23268/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne): Nutritional screening is a first-line process of identifying patients who are already malnourished or at risk of becoming so; nutritional assessment is a detailed investigation to identify and quantify specific nutritional problems.

Good nutrition is fundamental for health, healing and recovery from illness and injury. Malnutrition is associated with muscle wasting, impaired respiratory and cardiac function, decreased mobility, susceptibility to infection and delayed wound healing, depression and lethargy. Many factors including disease predispose to malnourishment and indicators of malnutrition are found in community patients.

The Health Service Executive has a nutrition screening programme in place in the community and I am referring your question to HSE for further details.

Mental Health Services Data

364. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the number of patients availing of mental health services in the community setting who are malnourished or at risk of malnutrition; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23269/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Mental Health Services Data

365. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the number of patients availing of mental health services in the acute setting who are malnourished or at risk of malnutrition; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23270/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Mental Health Services

366. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the way in which malnutrition is identified and managed in patients of mental health institutions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23271/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Mental Health Services

367. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to a study (details supplied) that documents a strong correlation between mental health problems and malnutrition in free-living older persons; the way in which this is identified and managed in the community here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23272/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): I am aware of the study referred to by the Deputy, which has only recently come to the attention of my Department. I have asked the Department of Health, in conjunction with the HSE, to examine this in detail, in the context of developing future policy and services for mental health.

Hospital Waiting Lists Data

368. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the number of children in County Wexford awaiting access to the community ophthalmic physician; the numbers waiting more than three, six, nine, 12, 15, 18 and 21 months, respectively; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23274/18]

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.

Hospital Waiting Lists Data

369. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons County Wexford awaiting cataract surgery between referrals; the numbers waiting more than three, six, nine, 12, 15, 18, 21, 24 and 27 months, respectively; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23275/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

Hospital Appointments Status

370. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of a hospital appointment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23284/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Ser-

vice Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The National Waiting List Management Policy, a standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, January 2014, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

Transport Support Scheme

371. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the status of the new transport support scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23285/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): The Deputy will be familiar with the background to the closure of both the Mobility Allowance and Motorised Transport Grant schemes in February 2013. Since the closure of the Mobility Allowance, the Government has directed that the Health Service Executive should continue to pay an equivalent monthly payment of up to €208.50 per month to the 4,133 people in receipt of the Mobility Allowance, on an interim basis, pending the establishment of a new Transport Support Scheme.

The Government decided that the detailed preparatory work required for a new Transport Support Scheme and associated statutory provisions should be progressed by the Minister for Health. The Programme for a Partnership Government acknowledges the ongoing drafting of primary legislation for a new Transport Support Scheme to assist those with a disability to meet their mobility costs. The Health (Transport Support) Bill is on the list of priority legislation for publication in the Spring/Summer session 2018. I can confirm that work on the policy proposals for the new Scheme is at an advanced stage. The proposals seek to ensure that:

- There is a firm statutory basis to the Scheme's operation.
- There is transparency and equity in the eligibility criteria attaching to the Scheme;
- Resources are targeted at those with greatest needs; and
- The Scheme is capable of being costed and is affordable on its introduction and on an ongoing basis.

My colleague, the Minister for Health and I recently brought a Memorandum to Government for proposals for a new Transport Support Payment Scheme. Following consideration of the matter, it was decided to withdraw the Memorandum from the cabinet Agenda on 8 May last. I intend to revert to Government with revised proposals to reflect the discussion at Cabinet, in due course.

With regard to the Motorised Transport Grant, this scheme operated as a means-tested grant to assist persons with severe disabilities with the purchase or adaptation of a car, where that car was essential to retain employment. The maximum Motorised Transport Grant, which was payable once in any three year period, was €5,020. Following the closure of the scheme in

February 2013, no further Motorised Transport Grants have been payable.

It is important to note that the Disabled Drivers and Disabled Passengers scheme operated by the Revenue Commissioners, remains in place. This scheme provides VRT and VAT relief, an exemption from road tax and a fuel grant to drivers and passengers with a disability, who qualify under the relevant criteria set out in governing regulations made by the Minister for Finance. Specifically adapted vehicles driven by persons with a disability are also exempt from payment of tolls on national roads and toll bridges. Transport Infrastructure Ireland has responsibility for this particular scheme.

There are improvements in access to a range of transport support schemes available to persons with disabilities in the State and on-going work is being carried out by Government Departments, agencies and transport providers to further improve access to public transport services. Under the National Disability Inclusion Strategy, the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport has responsibility for the continued development of accessibility and availability of public transport for people with a disability.

Health Services Provision

372. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) can avail of rehabilitation services; the position of the person on the waiting list; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23286/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): As this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services

373. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health if the need to allow advanced nurse practitioners to provide initial assessment for access to CAMHS will be examined; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23287/18]

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.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services Provision

374. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health if the need to open day hospitals to provide an alternative to acute hospital admission for those seeking access to CAMHS will be examined; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23288/18]

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.

Departmental Contracts

375. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Health 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 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 Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As previously advised to Deputy Burton earlier this year, the Department has one contract with this company. One payment was made to the company in question in June 2017 following a procurement exercise, in respect of an one year contract for maintenance and licensing in respect of Sophos Anti Virus protection.

I have referred the Deputy's question to the HSE in respect of any contracts that organisation may have with the company in question.

Details for other bodies under the aegis of the Department are operational matters for the bodies concerned and the Deputy should contact the relevant Director/CEO/Registrar directly.

Home Help Service

376. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will be allocated extra home help hours in view of their exceptional medical conditions; if the HSE will provide an extensive home care package in this case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23293/18]

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.

Paediatric Services

377. **Deputy Bobby Aylward** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding the use of equipment (details supplied) in the treatment of children with scoliosis; the steps he has taken to satisfy himself that there are no health and safety risks to children with scoliosis being treated with the equipment; the steps he has taken to ensure that parents are informed about potential health and safety risks in the use of the equipment and to ensure informed consent guidelines are abided by in all such instances; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23298/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Department of Health and the HSE promote the use of safe high quality evidence-based treatment in all clinical situations. The use of a specific treatment for an individual patient is a clinical matter for the treating consultant to discuss and agree with the patient and his/her family.

Hospital Waiting Lists

378. **Deputy Bobby Aylward** asked the Minister for Health the steps he has taken to correct the inequity in waiting times, which can differ in children's hospitals by up to two years in some cases, for outpatient children with scoliosis (details supplied); the steps he has taken to ensure that lists are amalgamated, as committed to previously; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23299/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Improving waiting times for hospital pro-

cedures and outpatient appointments is a key commitment in the programme for Government.

The development of a sustainable and safe paediatric orthopaedic service, including scoliosis services for children and young people has been prioritised in the 2018. An additional €9 million has been provided to the HSE in 2018 specifically to develop paediatric orthopaedic services, including increasing access to scoliosis services.

The HSE and Children's Hospital Group (CHG) developed a Paediatric Scoliosis Waiting List Action Plan for 2018 and this includes actions targeted at patients waiting longest for an outpatient appointment.

The HSE advise that, under the National Service Plan 2018, funding for two new consultant posts for paediatric orthopaedics has been provided and these appointments are expected to be finalised in quarter 4 of 2018. These posts are to be allocated to Our Lady's Children's Hospital Crumlin and Temple Street Children's University Hospital for paediatric orthopaedics and are expected to have a positive impact on current patient waiting times.

The HSE National Service Plan sets out a target that 80% of patients waiting for a first outpatient appointment will be seen within a 52 week wait timeframe. HSE figures for March 2018 show that the three hospitals of the CHG are seeing 62-64% of outpatients within 52 weeks.

The CHG advise that capacity challenges are managed daily, with each of the three children's hospitals supporting each other in terms of bed utilisation and availability.

The HSE advise that a Paediatric Scoliosis Services Co-Design group is in place, which includes clinicians, hospital staff and representatives from the scoliosis advocacy groups, to design a comprehensive, contemporary, and patient-centred approach to the delivery of scoliosis services.

The Children's Hospital Group has developed an integration strategy to integrate clinical and non-clinical services across the three hospitals and to ensure a smooth transition to the new facilities. A central referrals system is being developed as part of this integration strategy which will be key to supporting clinical services to operate as a single service across multiple locations. The system will be introduced on a phased basis commencing with general paediatrics in the first quarter of 2019.

The HSE is working with the NTPF and my Department to finalise a joint plan focused on improving overall use of resources to tackle long patient waiting times and ensure timely access to treatment and care for our patients. I hope to publish this Plan shortly. As part of this process the NTPF and the HSE are currently reviewing proposals from hospitals, including the hospitals across the CHG, for outpatient initiatives.

Paediatric Services

379. **Deputy Bobby Aylward** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding the provision of vests for bracing therapy for children being treated for scoliosis; the steps he has taken to ensure that vests for bracing therapy are provided to children being treated for scoliosis free of charge at children's hospitals (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23300/18]

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.

Paediatric Services

380. **Deputy Bobby Aylward** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding the number of opening days per week for operating theatres at children's hospitals (details supplied); if operating theatre opening days will be extended, if possible; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23301/18]

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 Waiting Lists

381. **Deputy Bobby Aylward** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding the four-month waiting list target for surgeries for children suffering with scoliosis not being met as committed to previously; the steps he has taken to ensure that the 88 children currently waiting longer than four months will be catered for as urgently as possible; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23302/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Improving waiting times for hospital procedures and outpatient appointments is a key commitment in the programme for Government.

The development of a sustainable and safe paediatric orthopaedic service, including scoliosis services for children and young people has been prioritised in the 2018. An additional €9 million has been provided to the HSE in 2018 specifically to develop paediatric orthopaedic services, including increasing access to scoliosis services.

The HSE has confirmed that it will maintain the 4-month target in 2018 and beyond, which is international best practice, for all patients who are clinically deemed to require scoliosis surgery now.

Figures provided by the Children's Hospital Group (CHG) show that as of the week-ending 18th May 2018, there were 178 patients on the scoliosis waiting list, with 84 patients waiting more than 4 months.

Patients waiting over 4 months are reviewed weekly in relation to their treatment plan. Decisions to schedule patients are made clinically. In line with the Scoliosis Action Plan 2018, the CHG will prioritise inpatient access to include outsourcing initiatives to achieve a 4 month waiting time for clinically deemed treatments and offers of outsourcing are currently being made to the families of those deemed clinically suitable.

The HSE advise that, under the National Service Plan 2018, funding for two new consultant posts for paediatric orthopaedics has been provided and these appointments are expected to be finalised in quarter 4 of 2018. These posts are to be allocated to Our Lady's Children's Hospital Crumlin and Temple Street Children's University Hospital for paediatric orthopaedics and are expected to have a positive impact on current patient waiting times.

The CHG advise that capacity challenges are managed daily, with each of the three children's hospitals supporting each other in terms of bed utilisation and availability.

The HSE advise that a Paediatric Scoliosis Services Co-Design group is in place, which includes clinicians, hospital staff and representatives from the scoliosis advocacy groups, to design a comprehensive, contemporary, and patient-centred approach to the delivery of scoliosis services.

The CHG has developed an integration strategy to integrate clinical and non-clinical services across the three hospitals and to ensure a smooth transition to the new facilities. A central referrals system is being developed as part of this integration strategy which will be key to supporting clinical services to operate as a single service across multiple locations. The system will be introduced on a phased basis commencing with general paediatrics in the first quarter of 2019.

Hospital Appointments Status

382. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Health when an outpatient appointment will be issued to a person (details supplied) in County Mayo in view of the fact that this person has been waiting for an appointment for some time now; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23303/18]

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.

Health Products Regulatory Authority

383. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Health if he and the HPRA plan to limit or ban the use of transvaginal mesh in view of bans and restrictions imposed in other jurisdictions; if not, the reason for the retention of this procedure; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23304/18]

384. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Health when the report from the Chief Medical Officer in connection with the use of transvaginal mesh is due to be published; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23305/18]

385. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Health if he has met with the representatives of women affected by the use of transvaginal mesh; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23306/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 383 to 385, inclusive, together.

I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy on this matter.

Health Services Data

386. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the number of women who have had a transvaginal mesh implanted; the number who have suffered complications in connection with this mesh; the number who have had the transvaginal mesh removed both here and in another jurisdiction under the treatment abroad scheme; the number who are waiting to have the mesh removed in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23307/18]

387. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 289 of 8 May 2018, the number of women who have had the transvaginal mesh removed here; the number of hospitals that have provided this procedure; the number of surgeons here who carry out the removal of transvaginal mesh in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23308/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 386 and 387 together.

As the queries raised by the Deputy relate to service issues, I have asked the HSE to reply to you directly.

Treatment Abroad Scheme

388. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the role and responsibilities of Irish health services and the HSE in providing care to a person that qualifies for the treatment abroad scheme in connection with the removal of transvaginal mesh, including the role of all health services in referring persons to services in another jurisdiction; the medical supports provided to persons including travelling safely under medical supervision and medical aftercare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23309/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

Hospital Waiting Lists Data

389. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons in the CHO4 area waiting for ophthalmology surgery following initial assessment; the number waiting 0 to 12, 12 to 26, 26 to 52 and greater than 52 weeks, respectively; the number from each area within the CHO; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23311/18]

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.

Medical Card Administration

390. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health if blood pressure monitoring equipment and services are covered by the medical card scheme in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23312/18]

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.

Hospital Transfers

391. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will be transferred from Galway to Dublin due to the exceptional medical circumstances in this case; the reason for the delay in issuing the funding for this transfer; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23313/18]

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.

Medical Card Delays

392. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Health the reason for the delay in issuing a medical card for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23314/18]

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

Medical Card Reviews

393. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the progress to date in the determination of a medical card review in the case of a person (details supplied); when the review will be concluded; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23321/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter the HSE has been asked to respond directly to the Deputy.

Primary Care Services Provision

394. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Health if a full-time nursing care service will be reinstated at Easkey health care centre; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23326/18]

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 Waiting Lists

395. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Health when an operation will be provided for a person (details supplied) in County Galway; the reason for the delay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23327/18]

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.

Services for People with Disabilities

396. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health his views on the proposed standard operating procedures on the assessment on needs process; when it is planned that the new procedures will be implemented; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23328/18]

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.

Services for People with Disabilities

397. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health if the implementation of the new standard operating procedures on the assessment on needs process can be postponed to allow for engagement and consultation with parents and other health and social care professional representative bodies; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23329/18]

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.

Health Services Staff Data

398. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health the number of audiolo-

gists working in CHO area 9 in each of the years 2015 to 2017 and to date in 2018; if this number will be increased; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23330/18]

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.

Hospital Consultant Recruitment

399. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health his plans to appoint a third consultant ophthalmic surgeon for Beaumont Hospital, Dublin 9; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23331/18]

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.

Disability Services Provision

400. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Health the options open to a family (details supplied) in County Kildare in view of the overwhelming evidence that their child needs help. [23336/18]

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.

Health Insurance

401. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health his views on the practice of health insurance companies preventing policy holders from switching to another plan within that insurance company except upon renewal; his views on whether this practice hurts customers that have to adjust their cover mid-year due to life circumstances; the controls in place governing the provision of health insurance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23338/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In general, health insurance policies are 12-month contracts. All insurers must provide a 14-day cooling-off period from the commencement of the contract, during which time people may cancel and get a full refund.

If people want to switch insurer or plan, they may do so at their next renewal date. In some cases, insurers allow policyholders to switch plans during the 12-month term. Alternatively, insurers may impose penalties if choosing to switch during the term of an existing contract.

The health insurance market in Ireland is a well regulated market and further general infor-

mation and information specifically about switching is available on the website of the Health Insurance Authority at www.hia.ie/consumer-information/cancelling-your-health-insurance-plan.

Hospital Waiting Lists Data

402. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons on the scoliosis list; the length of time each has been waiting; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23343/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Improving waiting times for hospital procedures and outpatient appointments is a key commitment in the programme for Government.

The development of a sustainable and safe paediatric orthopaedic service, including scoliosis services for children and young people has been prioritised in the 2018. An additional €9 million has been provided to the HSE in 2018 specifically to develop paediatric orthopaedic services, including increasing access to scoliosis services.

The HSE has confirmed that it will maintain the 4-month target in 2018 and beyond, which is international best practice, for all patients who are clinically deemed to require scoliosis surgery now.

Figures provided by the Children's Hospital Group (CHG) show that as of the week-ending 18th May 2018, there were 178 patients on the scoliosis waiting list, with 84 patients waiting more than 4 months.

Patients waiting over 4 months are reviewed weekly in relation to their treatment plan. Decisions to schedule patients are made clinically. In line with the Scoliosis Action Plan 2018, the CHG will prioritise inpatient access to include outsourcing initiatives to achieve a 4 month waiting time for clinically deemed treatments and offers of outsourcing are currently being made to the families of those deemed clinically suitable.

The HSE advise that, under the National Service Plan 2018, funding for two new consultant posts for paediatric orthopaedics has been provided and these appointments are expected to be finalised in quarter 4 of 2018. These posts are to be allocated to Our Lady's Children's Hospital Crumlin and Temple Street Children's University Hospital for paediatric orthopaedics and are expected to have a positive impact on current patient waiting times.

The CHG advise that capacity challenges are managed daily, with each of the three children's hospitals supporting each other in terms of bed utilisation and availability.

The HSE advise that a Paediatric Scoliosis Services Co-Design group is in place, which includes clinicians, hospital staff and representatives from the scoliosis advocacy groups, to design a comprehensive, contemporary, and patient-centred approach to the delivery of scoliosis services.

The CHG has developed an integration strategy to integrate clinical and non-clinical services across the three hospitals and to ensure a smooth transition to the new facilities. A central referrals system is being developed as part of this integration strategy which will be key to supporting clinical services to operate as a single service across multiple locations. The system will be introduced on a phased basis commencing with general paediatrics in the first quarter of 2019.

National Treatment Purchase Fund Data

403. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons that were treated under the National Treatment Purchase Fund; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23344/18]

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 Inpatient/Day Case Action Plan 2018 which was published in April outlines the combined impact of HSE and NTPF activity in 2018 to reduce the number of patients waiting for treatment.

Under the Action Plan, it is estimated that the NTPF initiatives in 2018 will enable the provision of treatment for up to 20,000 patients on the Inpatient/Day Case Waiting List across a range of specialties and procedures, and 4,000 Gastro Intestinal Scopes through both outsourcing and HSE insourcing initiatives.

Under the Action Plan, the NTPF commits to offer treatment to all clinically suitable patients waiting more than 9 months for treatment in a number of high volume specialities - including cataract, hip and knee replacement, tonsils and scopes.

This will mean that by the end of 2018 we will expect to see a significant reduction in the number waiting for a procedure to under 70,000 - from a peak of 86,100 in July 2017.

The NTPF has advised that up to the end of April 2018, over 11,900 patients have been authorised for treatment. Almost 6,500 of these patients have accepted an offer of treatment and 4,816 of these patients have already received their procedure.

Hospital Waiting Lists Data

404. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons on the inpatient and outpatient list for gynaecological procedures in CUMH; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23345/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The waiting list data from the National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF) for the end of April 2018 indicates that there were 410 people waiting for Cork University Maternity Hospital (CUMH) gynaecology inpatient services, compared with 479 waiting in April 2017. In April 2018, 54% of patients were waiting for less than 6 months, and 80% were waiting for less than 12 months.

The outpatient waiting list data for April indicates there were 3,629 people waiting for gynaecology services, compared with 4,667 in April 2017. In April 2018, 42% were waiting for less than 6 months, 72% were waiting less than 12 months.

In recent years, CUMH has received funding to invest in the improvement in its Gynaecology Services. The South/South West Hospital Group (SSWHG) committed an additional €700,000 to the service for 2017 to provide increased theatre capacity and staffing resources to deliver improved waiting times for inpatient/daycase treatment and outpatient appointments. An additional €0.4m in funding has also been allocated by SSWHG for CUMH gynaecology services in 2018.

More broadly, the Inpatient/Day Case Action Plan 2018 which was published in April outlines the combined impact of HSE and NTPF activity in 2018 to reduce the number of patients

waiting for treatment. Under the Plan, the HSE will deliver 1.14 million hospital procedures. The NTPF will deliver 20,000 Inpatient Day Case treatments through both outsourcing and HSE insourcing. As outlined in the Plan, the NTPF and the HSE will invite proposals from hospitals for waiting list initiatives. The NTPF will provide funding to the solutions proposed if appropriate.

In January 2017, a National Women & Infants Health Programme was established within the HSE to lead the management, organisation and delivery of maternity, gynaecological and neonatal services. In addition, the SSWHG has developed a phased approach to improve waiting times for gynaecology services at CUMH. This includes the establishment of the SSWHG Women and Children Services Directorate last year, which, I expect, will ensure better coordination and utilisation of maternity gynaecological resources across the group.

Hospital Waiting Lists

405. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Health the average waiting time women have to wait for surgical procedures in CUMH after they have been diagnosed with breast cancer and prescribed mastectomies or partial mastectomies; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23346/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I am advised by the HSE that the National Cancer Control Programme surgery Key Performance Indicator (KPI) for breast cancer is that surgical intervention will be carried out within 20 working days of the date of the Multi-Disciplinary Meeting at which surgery is identified as the first treatment.

Figures for Cork University Hospital (CUH) for 2017 show that 79% of patients received surgical intervention within the 20 day target. The HSE has further advised that contributing factors which may affect compliance with the target include capacity and personal reasons of patients themselves.

A breakdown of performance in regard to the 212 patients in CUH in 2017 is outlined in the table below:

2017	< 20 days	< 25 days	< 30 days	> 30 days
No.	168	24	14	6
%	79%	11%	7%	3%

Hospital Acquired Infections

406. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health if it is HSE policy to ensure that the presence of hospital acquired infection is recorded on the death certificates of persons that die as a consequence of same. [23349/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter the question has been referred to the HSE for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

Hospital Acquired Infections

407. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health if consideration has been given to assigning a specialist task force to monitor and control the spread of superbugs in University

Hospital Limerick in view of the very serious deficiencies reported in the management and control of CPE in the September 2017 HIQA inspection report of the hospital in particular (details supplied). [23350/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The prevention and control of healthcare associated infections (HCAs) and Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) has been a significant patient safety and public health priority for the Department of Health for numerous years.

I convened the National Public Health Emergency Team (NPHE) in October 2017, as a public health response to the CPE superbug. CPE has been declared as a public health emergency, so that it is managed in line with the Public Health Plans which have been previously put in place for influenza. The NPHE will continue to meet regularly until the Department is assured that the HSE is managing CPE effectively, including screening, surveillance and management of outbreaks.

My Department has also provided funding to expand the HSE HCAI/AMR National Team and with regard to CPE, a HSE Implementation Team has now been established and has been resourced by the Department. Implementation Leads will progress the work of the Implementation Team, across the Hospital Groups and Community Healthcare Organisations. My department has also provided funding for additional capacity in the Infection Prevention Control Team in University Hospital Limerick.

I launched Ireland's National Action Plan on Antimicrobial Resistance 2017-2020 (iNAP) on 25 October last with Minister Michael Creed, Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, as a whole of government approach to tackling AMR. The actions taken via NPHE also support iNAP implementation.

International Programmes

408. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the amount contributed to the World Health Organisation in each of the past six years; the programmes that benefitted; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23353/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): My Department makes membership payments to the World Health Organisation (WHO) annually based on the assessed contribution for a given budgetary period. A member state's contribution to the WHO is calculated relative to the country's wealth and population. The budget requirements are estimated on a biennial basis and agreed at the WHO Executive Board before being adopted at the World Health Assembly.

The table below shows the amounts paid in the last six years:

Amount (€)	Description
1,795,529.78	2012 WHO Contribution
1,741,595.63	2013 WHO Contribution
1,468,627.75	2014 WHO Contribution
1,747,432.78	2015 WHO Contribution
1,756,334.91	2016 WHO Contribution
1,442,599.49	2017 WHO Contribution

The membership contribution helps support the activities of the WHO's General Programme of Work (GPW) which comprises the "base" programmes, plus polio, special programmes and the event-driven component of outbreaks and crisis response.

The base programmes of the current GPW are as follows:

Category 1: Communicable Diseases

Category 2: Noncommunicable Diseases

Category 3: Promoting Health Through The Life Course

Category 4: Health Systems

Category 5: Preparedness, Surveillance and Response

Category 6: Corporate Services/Enabling Functions.

In addition, the Department of Health also makes financial contributions to other WHO initiatives, namely the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) and the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC).

IARC contributes to the development of cancer policies and cancer control through research (including aetiological, epidemiological, screening and health systems research), dissemination of information, development of standards and training of cancer specialists.

The table below shows the financial contributions to IARC for each of the years 2012-2017:

Amount (€)	Description
633,899.00	IARC Contribution 2012
646,745.00	IARC Contribution 2013
628,062.00	IARC Contribution 2014
642,263.00	IARC Contribution 2015
615,614.00	IARC Contribution 2016
636,033.00	IARC Contribution 2017

The benefits of such international collaboration are acknowledged in the recently published National Cancer Strategy 2017-2026.

The WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC) is the first international treaty negotiated under the auspices of WHO. It was adopted by the World Health Assembly on 21 May 2003 and entered into force on 27 February 2005. Ireland ratified the treaty in November 2005.

The contributions made to the FCTC since 2012 are set out in the following table:

Amount (€)	Description
44,787.52	FCTC (2012-2013)
37,829.41	FCTC (2014-2015)
43,713.30	FCTC (2016-2017)
32,121.30	FCTC (2018-2019)

The contributions go toward a workplan and budget which is agreed on at the Conference of Parties (COP).

Hospital Waiting Lists Data

409. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the number of patients awaiting cataract treatment in each of the past four years by county in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23357/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In relation to the number of patients awaiting cataract treatment in each of the past four years by county, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

Question No. 410 answered with Question No. 108.

Hospital Appointments Status

411. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will receive an appointment for a hip replacement; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23364/18]

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.

Health Services

412. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Health when a final response will issue to an interim reply (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23365/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I am arranging for a reply to issue to the Deputy urgently.

Home Help Service Provision

413. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Health if extra home help hours will be provided for a person (details supplied) in County Galway; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23367/18]

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 Waiting Lists

414. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Health the reason a person (details supplied) was advised that the waiting list for CT was 12 months; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23369/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Deputy’s question relates to service delivery matter and accordingly I have asked the HSE to respond directly to him.

Home Help Service Eligibility

415. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding the provision of home help or home care packages when a person is below 65 years of age but suffers from various diseases including partial blindness and multiple sclerosis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23403/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): The Health Service Executive (HSE) is committed to protecting the level of Personal Assistant services and Home Support services available to persons with disabilities. In their 2018 National Service Plan, the HSE’s priority is to provide 1.46 million hours of Personal Assistant services to more than 2,000 people with a disability, representing an increase of 60,000 over the 2017 target of 1.4 million hours. The HSE will also provide 2.93 million hours of Home Support services to adults and children with a disability, an increase of 180,000 hours over the 2017 target of 2.75 million hours.

As the Deputy’s question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the HSE for a direct reply to the Deputy.

National Cervical Screening Programme

416. **Deputy Jan O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 352 of 15 May 2018, if there is tagging or priority identification in relation to smear tests for women that have been called back for colposcopy due to abnormalities or pre-cancer symptoms in a smear test and are therefore scheduled for more regular screening to ensure that they are given the detailed attention required; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23412/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Women can be referred for more regular smear tests if required following colposcopy.

CervicalCheck currently uses three laboratories to analyse cervical screening tests, including those from women who have been referred for colposcopy and I am advised that there is no such differentiation between samples in the laboratory.

All of these laboratories meet CervicalCheck’s quality assurance guidelines and are certified by the relevant national authorities to an international standard. The laboratories have robust quality assurance and two screeners examine every test.

The clinical advice is that there is no evidence that the clinical and technical aspects of the programme have performed outside or below international standards or the quality guidelines set for the programme.

All aspects of CervicalCheck will be examined as part of the Scally Inquiry, the Terms of Reference of which are very comprehensive and reflect engagement on a cross-party basis. Separately, there will also be an International Clinical Expert Review led by the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists. These inquiries will ensure independent and international scrutiny of performance.

Hospital Appointments Status

417. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) waiting for a procedure at the Mater Hospital will receive an appointment for the operation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23417/18]

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.

Disabilities Assessments

418. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health his plans to address the HSE's waiting times for assessment of need for children with disabilities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23476/18]

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.

HSE Staff

419. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Health the number of employees that have not been released from their contracts within the time limit set out for post-recruitment release arrangements under the HSE HR Circular 001/2015; and having been offered a

new position, the particulars of the positions; the steps being taken to ensure compliance with the circular; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23498/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy on this matter.

Services for People with Disabilities

420. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Health the reason the attention of the parents and members of a group (details supplied) was not drawn to the new standard operating procedures put in place as part of the assessment of needs process; if the group will be consulted to ensure the best interests of the child and families remain central to new processes being implemented; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23499/18]

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

421. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the reason more than 16,000 persons had been waiting over a year for an outpatient appointment in County Cork hospitals in April 2018. [23513/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I acknowledge that Outpatient waiting times are often unacceptably long and I am conscious of the burden that this places on patients and their families.

Each year 3.3 million patients attend Hospital Outpatient clinics for appointments, with demand for services growing year-on-year. A key component of the management of waiting lists by hospitals is the categorisation of patients by clinical priority to ensure that all patients receive care in timely and clinically appropriate matter.

The HSE National Service Plan 2018 sets out a target that 80% of patients waiting for a first outpatient appointment will be seen within a 52 week wait timeframe. Based upon HSE figures for March 2018 these hospitals are seeing on average over 78% outpatients within 52 weeks.

In 2017, Cork hospitals (Bantry General; Cork University Hospital; Cork University Maternity Hospital; Mallow General; Mercy University Hospital; South Infirmity University Hospital) had over 351,000 Outpatient Department attendances. However, almost 43,000 patients across these hospitals did not attend their appointments last year.

The HSE is working with the National Treatment Purchase Fund and my Department to finalise a joint outpatient Waiting List Action Plan focused on improving overall use of resources to tackle long patient waiting times and ensuring timely access to treatment and care for our

patients. I hope to publish this Plan shortly. As part of this process the National Treatment Purchase Fund and the HSE are currently reviewing proposals from hospitals for outpatient initiatives.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services Provision

422. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the extent to which children or teenagers liable to self-harm continue to have ready access to support services such as counselling and follow-up visits; the degree to which patterns over the past number of years have illustrated the adequacy of such support services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [18844/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Question No. 423 answered with Question No. 64.

Speech and Language Therapy Provision

424. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Health the measures being put in place to provide 92 children that attend a school (details supplied) speech and language therapy and occupational therapy; and if the children will have access to the July provision. [22221/18]

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.

Home Help Service Provision

425. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Health the number of home care hours available from Old County Road public health centre, Dublin 12 on 1 January 2018 and 1 April 2018 (details supplied). [23227/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Question No. 426 answered with Question No. 60.

Hospital Waiting Lists

427. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health the action he will take to address the long waiting times for ophthalmology services in both primary care and acute hospitals. [23545/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Reducing waiting time for patients for hospital operations and procedures is a key priority for the Government.

Cataract surgery is among the most common surgical procedures carried out in the Ophthalmology specialty. Through the work of the National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF) and the HSE, the overall number of patients waiting for cataract surgery has fallen by 22% since July 2017, while the number of patients waiting more than 12 months has declined by 71% in the same period. For 2018, under the Inpatient/Day Case Action Plan, all clinically suitable patients waiting for more than 9 months for a Cataract procedure will be offered treatment this year, with 5,000 NTPF funded procedures planned in both public and private hospitals.

Last year funding was allocated to provide additional capacity at the Royal Victoria Eye and Ear Hospital as a result and a cataract theatre is now operational three days per week. This year, in line with the Action Plan, the HSE is planning to open a dedicated Cataract theatre in Nenagh Hospital in July.

In primary care, the HSE published the Report of the Primary Care Eye Services Review Group in June 2017. The Report sets out the way forward for a significant amount of eye services to be provided in a primary care setting. The recommendations of the Report are to be implemented on a phased basis subject to available resources.

To support the implementation of the Report, funding of €1m was allocated this year to establish primary care eye teams in South and West Dublin and further develop the primary care eye team in North Dublin to help alleviate waiting lists.

Medical Aids and Appliances Provision

428. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Health the reason the use of a prosthetic is unavailable and not provided for by the HSE in County Donegal but is available in other parts of the country free of charge (details supplied); if the HSE plans to make the products available in County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23598/18]

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.

Medicinal Products Availability

429. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health the plans being made by the Health Products Regulatory Authority and or the Health Service Executive to licence and make available for reimbursement the drug Ocrevus, ocrelizumab, which treats adult patients with relapsing forms of multiple sclerosis and primary progressive multiple sclerosis. [23603/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The HSE has statutory responsibility for medicine pricing and reimbursement decisions, in accordance with the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013. As Minister for Health, I do not have any statutory power or function in relation to the reimbursement of medicines. The Act specifies the criteria for decisions on the reimbursement of medicines.

In line with the 2013 Act, if a company would like a medicine to be reimbursed by the HSE pursuant to the Community Drugs scheme, the company must first submit an application to the HSE to have the new medicine added to the Reimbursement List.

As outlined in the IPHA agreement, and in line with the 2013 Act, the HSE will decide, within 180 days of receiving the application (or a longer period if further information is sought from the company), to either add the medicine to the reimbursement list or agree to reimburse it as a hospital medicine, or refuse to reimburse the medicine.

HSE decisions on which medicines are reimbursed by the taxpayer are made on objective, scientific and economic grounds, on the advice of the National Centre for Pharmacoeconomics (NCPE).

The NCPE conducts health technology assessments (HTAs) for the HSE, and makes recommendations on reimbursement to assist HSE decisions. The NCPE uses a decision framework to systematically assess whether a drug is cost-effective as a health intervention.

The HSE strives to reach a decision in as timely a manner as possible. However, because of the significant monies involved, it must ensure that the best price is achieved, as these commitments are often multi-million euro investments on an on-going basis. This can lead to a protracted deliberation process.

I have been informed that Ocrelizumab for the treatment of adult patients with early primary progressive multiple sclerosis (PPMS) in terms of disease duration and level of disability, and with imaging features characteristic of inflammatory activity and for the treatment of adult patients with relapsing forms of multiple sclerosis (RMS) with active disease defined by clinical or imaging features is currently undergoing a full pharmacoeconomic assessment by the NCPE.

Home Care Packages

430. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health the status of the in loco parentis clause in homecare nursing contracts for sick children in view of the difficulties it is creating for parents (details supplied); and if further respite supports are being considered for parents of children with the most serious needs. [23604/18]

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.

Home Help Service Data

431. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the number of home help hours granted and the number of home help hours that are actually provided by county; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23609/18]

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.

Services for People with Disabilities

432. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health if an assessment of need for a child (details supplied) will be expedited; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23627/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose, and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

Hospital Appointments Status

433. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health if an appointment will be scheduled for a person (details supplied); the timeline for same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23628/18]

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.

Services for People with Disabilities

434. **Deputy Gino Kenny** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the change in the HSE procedure for the statutory assessment of need; if he has approved the new assessment of need standard operating procedure; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23634/18]

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.

HSE Complaints Procedures

435. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Health the actions which were taken by the HSE on foot of complaints received from the family of a person (details supplied) relevant to their care while a patient of the HSE at St. Columba's Hospital, Thomastown, County Kilkenny; if the serious issues raised by the family have been investigated; if the HSE has fully engaged with the family; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23636/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): I acknowledge that this issue has been difficult for the family involved.

The HSE's Quality Assurance and Verification Division has been asked to follow up regarding actions required and communication with the family. To further address and provide an update on the case as it is a service matter I have referred the Question to the HSE for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

Health Services Staff Data

436. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the spend on agency and locum staff in hospitals in each of the years 2010 to 2017 and to date in 2018, by nurses, doctors and so on and by hospital and CHO in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23672/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy on this matter.

Nursing Staff Provision

437. **Deputy Joe Carey** asked the Minister for Health when the appropriate number of MS specialist nurses for the mid-west region will be filled in view of the recommendations of the 2016 national clinical programme for neurology: model of care; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23673/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service issue, I have asked the HSE to reply to you directly.

Hospital Appointments Status

438. **Deputy Kevin O'Keeffe** asked the Minister for Health if a hospital appointment for a person (details supplied) will be brought forward. [23675/18]

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.

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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.

Departmental Correspondence

439. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Health if a reply will issue to matters raised by persons (details supplied) in correspondence; if the open disclosure policy will be applied in the case; and if he will request the HSE to meet with the persons [23680/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I can advise the Deputy that the person's correspondence, transferred from the Office of the Taoiseach to my Department, was replied to by me on 17 May 2018, addressing the issues raised.

Hospital Waiting Lists

440. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will receive an appointment for an operation. [23681/18]

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.

Home Care Packages Funding

441. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Health the initial financial allocation in 2017 for home support, home help and home care packages in counties Cavan and Monaghan; the expenditure incurred to year end in the programmes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23683/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as

possible.

Home Care Packages Expenditure

442. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Health the level of expenditure allocated for home support, home help and home care packages in counties Cavan and Monaghan in 2018; the number of hours of support such expenditure will provide; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23684/18]

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 Waiting Lists

443. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Health when an operation will be scheduled for a person (details supplied); the reason for the delay in issuing a date for the procedure in view of the fact that it was expected to proceed in April 2018; if the procedure can be provided on the National Treatment Purchase Fund scheme or in another way; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23687/18]

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.

Under the Inpatient Daycase Action Plan 2018, which was published last month, the HSE will deliver 1.14 million hospital procedures. The NTPF will deliver 20,000 Inpatient Day Case treatments through both outsourcing and HSE insourcing.

In terms of treatment offers, the NTPF authorises public hospitals to offer outsourced treatment to clinically suitable long waiting patients who are on an inpatient/day case waiting list for surgery, having been referred on to such a list following clinical assessment by a consultant/specialist at an outpatient clinic. NTPF authorisations are made in respect of the longest waiting patients first.

In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

Addiction Treatment Services

444. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health if funding streams are available

for a counselling service for persons in County Louth with drug and alcohol addictions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23690/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne): As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

Hospital Appointments Status

445. **Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Health if a person (details supplied) in County Cork will be assisted in ascertaining the proposed medical treatment for their son. [23692/18]

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

446. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health if an appointment for a person (details supplied) will be expedited; the status of same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23695/18]

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 Charges

447. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding payment for venesection and phlebotomy therapy treatment for haemochromatosis patients who do not qualify for a medical card; when phlebotomy will be provided free of charge to persons referred to hospitals; if the issue of therapeutic venesection services for persons with haemochromatosis has been discussed as part of the ongoing review of general medical services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23700/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Health Act 1970 (as amended) provides that all people ordinarily resident in the country are entitled, subject to certain charges, to public inpatient hospital services including consultant services and to public outpatient hospital services. Under s52 of the Health Act 1970, as amended by s12 of the Health (Amendment) Act 2013, a person who has been referred to a hospital for an in-patient service, including that provided on a day case basis, will have to pay the statutory daily charge, currently €80 per day, up to a maximum of €800 per year. On this basis, where venesection is classed as a day case procedure and is not carried out in an outpatient setting, the public in-patient charge applies.

The provision of therapeutic venesection services for medical and GP visit card holders is being considered as part of the consultations with GP representatives on the GMS Contract. Officials from my Department and the HSE met with the Irish Medical Organisation during May in order to progress this agenda. In line with the long established approach to such processes, and by agreement with the parties concerned, I am not in position to provide further details while these discussions are under way.

My Department and the HSE are currently considering the issue of the application of the public in-patient charge of €80 for venesection in Acute Hospitals as well as broader issues in relation to the treatment of patients with Hereditary Haemochromatosis. In this context, a meeting involving representatives from the Department of Health and the HSE will be held shortly.

Home Care Packages Provision

448. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Health the status of an application by a person (details supplied) for a home care package; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23701/18]

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 Waiting Lists Action Plans

449. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Health his plans to reduce the waiting lists for children waiting for an outpatient appointment in the three Dublin children's hospitals especially the 10,000 children who are waiting 18 months and longer; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23706/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Improving waiting times for hospital procedures and outpatient appointments is a key commitment in the programme for Government. It is acknowledged that outpatient waiting lists are a challenge which need to be addressed.

The development of a sustainable and safe paediatric orthopaedic service, including scoliosis services for children and young people has been prioritised in the 2018. An additional €9 million has been provided to the HSE in 2018 specifically to develop paediatric orthopaedic services, including increasing access to scoliosis services.

The HSE and Children's Hospital Group (CHG) developed a Paediatric Scoliosis Waiting List Action Plan for 2018 and this includes actions targeted at patients waiting longest for an outpatient appointment.

The HSE National Service Plan sets out a target that 80% of patients waiting for a first outpatient appointment will be seen within a 52 week wait timeframe. HSE figures for March 2018 show that the three hospitals of the CHG are seeing 62-64% outpatients within 52 weeks.

In 2017, almost 150,000 (148,948) patients attended outpatients across the three hospitals of the CHG. It is worth noting that in the same year, across the three hospitals, over 21,000 (14%) of patients did not attend their hospital appointments.

The most recent NTPF figures for April 2018 show that there was a total of 43,316 patients on the outpatient waiting list across the three hospitals of the CHG. 77% of these patients are waiting 18 months or less.

The CHG advise that capacity challenges are managed daily, with each of the three children's hospitals supporting each other in terms of bed utilisation and availability.

A key component of the management of waiting lists by hospitals is the categorisation of patients by clinical priority to ensure that all patients receive care in a timely and clinically appropriate matter.

The HSE is working with the NTPF and my Department to finalise a joint plan focused on improving overall use of resources to tackle long patient waiting times and ensure timely access to treatment and care for our patients. I hope to publish this Plan shortly. As part of this process the NTPF and the HSE are currently reviewing proposals from hospitals, including the hospitals across the CHG, for outpatient initiatives.

Vaccination Programme

450. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health the clinical research which has been conducted by his Department and or the HSE into claims of links between the swine flu vaccine and conditions such as narcolepsy; the number of claims which have to date been formally lodged against the State and which are being dealt with by the State Claims Agency concerning same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23718/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): "Investigation of an increase in the incidence of narcolepsy in children and adolescents in 2009 and 2010", the Final Report of National Narcolepsy Study Steering Committee was published on 19 April 2012. The report is on the Department of Health website under the heading publications and statistics. The study, which was commissioned by the Department of Health, found there was a significant 13 fold higher risk of narcolepsy in vaccinated compared to unvaccinated individuals and the absolute increased risk associated with the vaccine was five narcolepsy cases per 100,000 vaccinated children and adolescents.

I cannot comment on individual cases or matters that are the subject of litigation but I can provide background information on this litigation and clarify matters that are already in the

public domain.

As of 21 May 2018, letters of claim and/or legal proceedings against the Minister, the Health Services Executive and GlaxoSmithKline Biological SA have been initiated by seventy individuals. The plaintiffs allege personal injury in which they claim the development of narcolepsy resulted from the administration of the H1N1 pandemic vaccine. The management of the cases transferred to the State Claims Agency (SCA) on 15 October 2013 when the Taoiseach signed the National Treasury Management Agency (Delegation of Claims Management Functions) (Amendment) Order 2013. I have been informed by the Agency that cases before the courts in relation to the management of the discovery is the lead case. It would not be appropriate for a Minister to interfere in the court's case management of these claims which are delegated to the SCA for management.

I am continuing to engage with the Minister for Justice and the Minister for Finance on what further improvements can be made to the legal framework governing the management of product liability cases.

Budget Submissions

451. **Deputy Bobby Aylward** asked the Minister for Health if the possibility of reducing the household charge for family carers in advance of budget 2019 will be examined; if the possibility of extending the provision of general practitioner visit cards to those in receipt of the respite care grant in advance of budget 2019 will be examined; his views on the provision of State-funded panic buttons or personal alarms to those aged under 65 who require 24-hour a day care; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23720/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): I believe the Deputy is referring to the Local Property Tax in the first part of the question. The Department of Health has no responsibility for taxation and accordingly I am referring this matter to my colleague Minister Donohoe's Department for reply directly to the Deputy.

In December 2017, the Government announced that additional funding would be provided to enable all carers in receipt of Carer's Allowance to qualify for a GP visit card. Government approval was given on the 11 April to provide GP services without fees to persons in receipt of either full or half rate Carer's Allowance or Carer's Benefit and to draft the Heads of Bill to legislate for this provision. These Heads have been prepared and will be submitted to Government next week for approval. It is intended that this measure will be implemented this year, subject to the drafting and enactment of the necessary legislation.

There are currently no plans to extend GP visit Cards to persons specifically in receipt of a Carer's Support Grant (formerly known as the Respite Care Grant), however it is noted that many persons in receipt of this Grant will qualify for a GP visit card as the Carer's Support Grant is paid automatically to persons in receipt of Carer's Allowance or Carer's Benefit.

The HSE provides products, supports, supplies, aids and appliances through Community Funded Schemes. Personal alarms are not provided by these schemes. Pobal, funded by the Department of Rural and Community Development, provides personal alarms for people aged 65 years and older through the Seniors Alert Scheme. No such scheme is in operation for the under 65's.

However in its fifth annual progress report of the National Carer's Strategy, the HSE notes that "Primary Care Physiotherapists/Occupational Therapists and Nursing personnel are involved in the assessment and provision of equipment and assistive technologies" and that "a

limited number of areas provide telecare support within available resources”.

Cancer Screening Programmes

452. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 416 of 22 May 2018, the reason the case of the woman concerned (details supplied) was not referred to in the reply; and if a woman can request that her smear test is sent to an Irish laboratory and that there is no cost associated with such a request for the test to be sent to an Irish laboratory. [23726/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As advised in Parliamentary Question No. 416 of 22 May 2018, any woman who has previously had a CervicalCheck smear test, and who following consultation with her GP determines that she wishes to have a further test, may do so without charge. This includes the woman concerned in this instance, whose details have been supplied by the Deputy. An agreement was reached between the HSE and GPs on the reimbursement arrangements that will apply in such cases. This arrangement applies.

Each clinic in which smear tests are taken for the CervicalCheck programme is assigned to a particular laboratory. Approximately 50% of smear tests are allocated to laboratories in Ireland for analysis. Given the volume of tests involved, it is not possible to redirect smear tests taken as part of the CervicalCheck programme to alternate labs.

I would like to emphasise again that there is no evidence that the clinical and technical aspects of the programme have performed outside or below international standards or the quality guidelines set for the programme. All laboratories currently contracted by CervicalCheck meet the programme’s standards and have ISO accreditation, certified by the relevant national authorities.

Health Services Staff Data

453. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health the number of health care assistants in each location in a region (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23734/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy on this matter.

Mental Health Services Provision

454. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Health if the 2017 United Nations Committee against Torture made a recommendation to the State on mental health provision to hire additional medical personnel and psychologists and enable the referral of prisoners requiring specialised medical care to medical facilities without delay; if this has occurred; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23742/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): Responsibility for the provision of healthcare in prisons rests with my colleague, the Minister for Justice and Equality.

Prison Medical Service

455. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Health when the last audit was carried out in all prison services specifically examining prisoners mental health, addiction and health needs for each prison; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23747/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne): Responsibility for the health needs of prisoners rests with my colleague, the Minister for Justice and Equality.

Prisoner Health

456. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Health the criteria that determine an inmate getting access to mental health supports while in prison; the make-up of each mental health team by prison in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23749/18]

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.

HSE Staff Recruitment

457. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health his views on the issues raised in correspondence regarding HSE recruitment (details supplied). [23759/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy on this matter.

Nursing Staff Data

458. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health the number of community registered general nurses in each location in a region (details supplied); the number of these nurses dealing with children; the number of these nurses dealing with adults; the number of vacancies in each location which have not been replaced; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23761/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy on this matter.

Hospital Waiting Lists Data

459. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the most serious waiting list situations in respect of various procedures at various public hospitals as recorded over the past three years; the degree to which he has put in place corrective measures; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23770/18]

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.

Waiting list data from the past three years show that the highest waiting lists have been

across the specialties of orthopaedics, ophthalmology and Otolaryngology (ENT).

The recently launched Inpatient/Day Case Action Plan outlines the combined impact of HSE and National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF) activity in 2018 and includes a particular focus on those specialties with high waiting lists.

Under the Action Plan the HSE will deliver 1.14 million elective inpatient and day case discharges and the NTPF will deliver 20,000 Inpatient Day Case treatments through both outsourcing and HSE insourcing. As part of this process the NTPF and the HSE are currently reviewing proposals from hospitals for waiting list initiatives. The NTPF will provide funding to the solutions proposed if appropriate.

The NTPF initiatives will include a number of high volume specialties and in particular 5,000 cataracts, 800 hip/knee replacements, 1,200 tonsillectomies. In addition, under the Plan, the NTPF commits to offer treatment to all clinically suitable patients waiting more than 9 months for treatment in these high volume specialties. This will mean that by the end of 2018 we will expect to see a significant reduction in the number waiting for a procedure to under 70,000 - from a peak of 86,100 in July 2017.

The Action Plan will continue to build on the work, in 2017, of the National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF) and the HSE, to maintain the reduction in the overall number of patients waiting for cataract surgery and the number of patients waiting more than 12 months. Last year funding was allocated to provide additional capacity at the Royal Victoria Eye and Ear Hospital as a result and a cataract theatre is now operational three days per week. This year, in line with the Action Plan, the HSE is planning to open a dedicated Cataract theatre in Nenagh Hospital in July.

Finally, my Department has placed a particular priority on performance improvement in scheduled and unscheduled care in order to improve access for patients. At the end of 2017, a new Unit was established in my Department with a remit to work with colleagues, HSE and NTPF to provide strategic direction and drive a whole of Department approach to performance oversight and innovation in this area. The monitoring of waiting lists is a key activity of this Unit.

Hospital Waiting Lists

460. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the extent to which the national treatment purchase scheme can be utilised to alleviate waiting lists at various public hospitals throughout the country; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23771/18]

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 National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF) to provide treatment for patients.

The recently launched Inpatient/Day Case Action Plan outlines the combined impact of HSE and NTPF activity in 2018 to reduce the number of patients waiting for treatment to below 70,000 in 2018.

In 2018 the NTPF will provide 20,000 inpatient day cases through a combination of outsourcing and HSE insourcing initiatives. The HSE will deliver 1.14 million hospital operations or procedures.

Under the Action Plan, the NTPF commits to offer treatment to all clinically suitable pa-

tients waiting more than 9 months for treatment in a number of high volume specialties - including cataract, hip and knee replacement, tonsils and scopes.

For patients who are waiting longest for other procedures, the NTPF and HSE will work together to identify the requirements, develop treatment plans, and where possible offer treatments from within existing HSE and NTPF resources.

In terms of treatment offers, the NTPF authorises public hospitals to offer outsourced treatment to clinically suitable long waiting patients who are on an inpatient/day case waiting list for surgery, having been referred on to such a list following clinical assessment by a consultant/specialist at an outpatient clinic. NTPF authorisations are made in respect of the longest waiting patients first.

Hospital Waiting Lists Data

461. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the number of patients on waiting lists for hip replacements at various hospitals throughout the country; the longest period of time that a person has been on this waiting list; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23772/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Improving waiting times for hospital procedures is a key commitment in the Programme for Government and this year, €50 million was allocated to the National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF) to provide treatment for patients and reduce waiting times. The Inpatient/Day Case Action Plan 2018 which was published in April outlines the combined impact of HSE and NTPF activity in 2018 to reduce the number of patients waiting for treatment. NTPF authorisations are made in respect of the longest waiting patients first.

The Action Plan has been developed to ensure an appropriate balance between high volume activities and offering treatment to complex long waiting patients.

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.

As outlined in the Plan, the NTPF will invite public hospitals to suggest solutions for very long waiters either in the private sector or through insourcing. The NTPF will provide funding to those suggested solutions that are appropriate.

The Waiting list figures are published every month by the NTPF on their website, ntpf.ie. The following table, and attached link, sets out the waiting list information requested by the Deputy for April 2018:

Longest waits (days)	days
Total arthroplasty of hip, bilateral	483
Total arthroplasty of hip, unilateral	1116

[List].

Nursing Staff Recruitment

462. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the degree to which adequate numbers of nurses are likely to become available throughout the public health sector over the next three years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23773/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): There is a global shortage of nurses and midwives. Irish nurses are much sought after internationally due to the quality of the education, training and experience they have received from the universities and hospital internships. The recruitment moratorium that was in place across the public service from 2007 has had a lasting impact on staffing levels with some specialties having been particularly affected.

However, despite these challenges, the HSE has succeeded in increasing the nursing numbers significantly to 36,777 at the end of 2017. As part of the Nursing Recruitment and Retention Agreement with the INMO and SIPTU, the HSE agreed to appoint 1,224 additional nurses and midwives in 2017. The final progress report shows that there has been significant growth in the appointment of nurses and midwives in the final months of the year with 942 WTE of the 1,224 posts filled (including student nurses) or 69% (847 WTE) excluding the student nurses. The HSE remain committed to the Agreement and efforts will continue to fill the remaining posts.

The measures put in place by the HSE to recruit nurses and midwives included two international recruitment campaigns in 2017 the “Bring Them Home” campaign and the “New Year New Career”. Nurses who relocate to work in the Irish public health service can receive up to €3,000 in relocation expenses. The HSE has also offered all 2017 graduate nurses permanent posts within a Hospital Group or CHO subject to them attaining registration and satisfactory performance. The HSE is currently in the process of offering the 2018 graduates permanent posts. Other efforts to increase nursing supply include an additional 130 nursing undergraduate places that were made available in the 2017 nursing degree programme.

To maintain the supply of nurses it is important to retain the current nurses and midwives. Some of the retention measures undertaken by the HSE include providing 120 Advanced Nurse Practitioner education places, a pre-retirement initiative, career breaks and education and training opportunities for career development.

Hospital Procedures

463. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the extent to which provision is being made to ensure that patients awaiting access to surgical procedures can have their waiting period minimised, thereby reducing the level of pain and suffering which can be considerable in cases in which such persons have to wait for a long period before gaining access to the service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23774/18]

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 National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF) to secure treatment for patients.

The recently launched Inpatient/Day Case Action Plan outlines the combined impact of HSE and NTPF activity in 2018 to reduce the number of patients waiting for treatment to below 70,000 in 2018. In 2018, the NTPF will provide 20,000 inpatient day cases through a combination of outsourcing and HSE insourcing initiatives. The HSE will deliver 1.14 million hospital operations or procedures.

The Action Plan has been developed to ensure an appropriate balance between high

volume activities and offering treatment to complex long waiting patients.

Under the Plan, the NTPF commits to offer treatment to all clinically suitable patients waiting more than 9 months for treatment in a number of high volume specialties - including cataract, hip and knee replacement, tonsils and scopes.

For those who are waiting longest for other procedures, the NTPF and HSE will work together to identify the requirements and develop treatment plans for patients. The NTPF will do this by inviting public hospitals to seek solutions for very long waiters either in the private sector or through insourcing. The NTPF will provide funding to the solutions proposed as appropriate.

In terms of treatment offers, the NTPF authorises public hospitals to offer outsourced treatment to clinically suitable long waiting patients who are on an inpatient/day case waiting list for surgery, having been referred on to such a list following clinical assessment by a consultant/specialist at an outpatient clinic. NTPF authorisations are made in respect of the longest waiting patients first.

Primary Care Centres Data

464. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the number of primary care centres already provided for and in operation throughout the country on a county basis; the number proposed for the future; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23775/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As the HSE has responsibility for the provision, along with the maintenance and operation of Primary Care Centres and other Primary Care facilities, the Executive has been asked to reply directly to the Deputy.

General Practitioner Data

465. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the number of general practitioners practising throughout County Kildare; the extent to which each practice is sufficiently supported to meet growing demands; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23776/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Hospital Waiting Lists Action Plans

466. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the extent to which his Department has identified the quantum of deficiencies within the health services which has resulted in delays to waiting lists at various levels; the measures he plans to take to address such issues; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23777/18]

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 Inpatient/Day Case Action Plan 2018 which was published in April outlines the combined impact of HSE and NTPF activity in 2018 to reduce the number of patients waiting for treatment.

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Under the Plan, in 2018 the HSE will deliver 1.14 million hospital operations or procedures and the NTPF will deliver 20,000 Inpatient Day Case treatments and 4,000 Gastro Intestinal Scopes.

Under the Action Plan, the NTPF commits to offer treatment to all clinically suitable patients waiting more than 9 months for treatment in a number of high volume specialties - including cataract, hip and knee replacement, tonsils and scopes.

Under the Action Plan the number of patients waiting longer than 9 months will fall by 10,000. The overall number of patients waiting for hospital operations and procedures will fall to under 70,000 by year end.

The Action Plan has been developed to ensure an appropriate balance between high volume activities and offering treatment to complex long waiting patients. For very long waiting patients, the Action Plan sets a target that the NTPF will provide 1,200 procedures in 2018 by inviting public hospitals to seek solutions for very long waiters either in the private sector or through insourcing. The NTPF will provide funding to the solutions proposed if appropriate.

The HSE is also working with the NTPF and my Department to finalise a joint Outpatient Waiting List Action Plan focused on improving overall use of resources to tackle long patient waiting times and ensuring timely access to treatment and care for our patients. I hope to publish this Plan shortly. As part of this process the NTPF and the HSE are currently reviewing proposals from hospitals for outpatient initiatives.

HSE Staff

467. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the extent to which plans are afoot to ensure the retention of adequate health personnel at all levels to meet eventualities and eliminate overcrowding at acute hospitals; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23778/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In the short term, I have asked the HSE and my Department to identify opportunities to increase capacity, in line with the Capacity Review recommendations, and I expect to receive finalised proposals shortly. Recruitment and retention of personnel will be a key factor in the delivery of additional capacity.

Recruitment and retention of key medical personnel in the health workforce is of vital importance. With regard to consultants, notwithstanding recruitment and retention challenges, these have increased by 110 in the 12 months to end March 2018 and by 462 in the past five years. The number of Non Consultant Hospital Doctors has also increased by 289 in the 12 months to end March, 2018, and by 1,358 in the past five years.

The HSE has been focussed on addressing issues associated with the creation and approval of consultant posts and successful recruitment. It is now giving effect to the report 'Towards Successful Consultant Recruitment, Appointment and Retention', completed in December 2016. It is also focussed on implementing the recommendations of the 'MacCraith Group' to support the recruitment and retention of consultants and NCHDs.

In terms of nurses and midwives, increasing nursing and midwifery numbers has been a priority for the past 18 months. The 2017 funded workforce plan, as part of the Nursing Recruitment and Retention Agreement, committed the HSE to recruiting 1,224 additional nurses and midwives. The final report setting out progress on implementation of the Agreement shows that there has been a significant growth in the appointment of nurses and midwives with 942 WTE

of the 1,224 posts filled (WTE's). The HSE remain committed to the Agreement and efforts will continue to fill the remaining posts. It has once again committed to offer all 2018 graduating student nurses and midwives permanent contracts within a Hospital Group or CHO, subject to their attaining registration and satisfactory performance.

I also note that the Public Service Pay Commission is currently looking at a number of medical grades, including consultants and nurses and midwives in the current phase of its work and is expected to report at the end of June.

Pharmaceutical Sector

468. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the extent to which the use of the single European market can be identified as a means of alleviating the impact of persons currently faced with the high cost of experimental drugs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23779/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Officials in my Department have sought clarification from the Deputy and on receipt of same I will arrange for a reply to issue.

Hospital Waiting Lists

469. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the degree to which lack of theatre space of a particular category has been identified as a contributory factor in the ongoing delays experienced by persons on waiting lists; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23780/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Improving waiting times for hospital procedures is a key commitment in the Programme for Government. Investing in additional capacity, including beds and theatre space; the progression of recruitment and retention of staff; the delivery of the NDP project including dedicated elective only hospitals and the ambitious reform agenda in the Sláintecare Report will improve waiting times and access for patients.

A number of initiatives are currently underway to improve access this year. As part of the Inpatient and Day Case Action Plan, launched in April 2018, €50 million was allocated to the National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF) to secure treatment for patients and reduce waiting times. The Action Plan targets a reduction in the waiting list for inpatient and day case treatment to below 70,000 by the end of 2018.

Under the Plan, the HSE will deliver 1.14 million hospital procedures. The NTPF will deliver 20,000 Inpatient Day Case treatments through both outsourcing and HSE insourcing. Through outsourcing, the NTPF secures access to additional theatre space for public patients.

In addition my Department will continue to work with the HSE and the NTPF to identify sustainable initiatives to improve waiting times. Last year funding was allocated to provide additional capacity at the Royal Victoria Eye and Ear Hospital as a result of such initiatives and a cataract theatre is now operational three days per week. This year, in line with the Action Plan, the HSE is planning to open a dedicated Cataract theatre in Nenagh Hospital in July.

Hospital Waiting Lists Data

470. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons on waiting lists for all orthopaedic and cardiac procedures; the extent to which contributory factors in the context of waiting lists have been identified; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23781/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Improving waiting times for hospital procedures is a key commitment in the Programme for Government and this year, €50 million was allocated to the National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF) to provide treatment for patients and reduce waiting times. The Inpatient/Day Case Action Plan 2018 which was published in April outlines the combined impact of HSE and NTPF activity in 2018 to reduce the number of patients waiting for treatment. NTPF authorisations are made in respect of the longest waiting patients first.

The Action Plan has been developed to ensure an appropriate balance between high volume activities and offering treatment to complex long waiting patients.

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.

For very long waiting patients, the Action Plan sets a target that the NTPF will provide 1,200 procedures in 2018. This could include those waiting for more complex procedures such as cardiology. As outlined in the Plan, the NTPF will invite public hospitals to suggest solutions for very long waiters either in the private sector or through insourcing. The NTPF will provide funding to those suggested solutions that are appropriate.

In addition, the HSE is working with the NTPF and my Department to finalise a joint Outpatient Waiting List Action Plan. Each year 3.3 million patients attend Hospital Outpatient clinics for appointments, with demand for services growing year-on-year. The Action Plan will focus on improving overall use of resources to tackle long patient waiting times and to ensure timely access to treatment and care for our patients. I hope to publish this Plan shortly. As part of this process the NTPF and the HSE are currently reviewing proposals from hospitals for outpatient initiatives.

In addition, my Department has placed a particular priority on performance improvement in scheduled and unscheduled care in order to improve access for patients. At the end of 2017, a new Unit was established in my Department with a remit to work with Departmental colleagues and with the HSE and NTPF to provide strategic direction and to drive a whole of Department approach to performance oversight and innovation in this area. The monitoring of waiting lists is a key activity of this Unit.

Waiting list figures are published every month by the National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF) on their website, www.ntpf.ie. The following table sets out the waiting list information requested by the Deputy for April 2018:

	Cardiology	Orthopaedics
Inpatient / Daycase	4,023	11,483
Outpatient	19,867	62,448

Hospital Appointments Status

471. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health the status of the case of a person

(details supplied); and when the person can expect a hospital appointment. [23801/18]

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.

Ministerial Transport

472. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the number of ministerial cars or vehicles in operation in each of the past six years; and the costs associated with same. [24032/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I can confirm that neither I nor any other Minister or Minister of State in the Department of Health in each of the past six years have had a Ministerial car provided from the Garda fleet.

GLAS Applications

473. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of an application by a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23729/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The above named was approved into GLAS 1 with a contract commencement date of 1 October 2015 and has received all payments in respect of 2015 and 2016.

The application was rejected from the scheme due to non-compliance with the Rare Breed action. The above named was informed of the appeals procedure for such cases and it is understood that an appeal has been received by the Agriculture Appeals Office.

Knowledge Transfer Programme

474. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when payment will issue to a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23730/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Knowledge Transfer (KT) is one of a suite of measures included under the Rural Development Programme

2014-2020 and involves the formation of knowledge transfer groups across the beef, dairy, equine, sheep, tillage and poultry sectors.

Participants attend group meetings and produce a Farm Improvement Plan in consultation with their KT Facilitator. For each year of the three year programme participants receive a payment of €750 for a primary sector and €375 for a secondary sector where all requirements of the programme have been met.

The person named is a participant in the Knowledge Transfer Beef Programme. Reimbursement for actions completed in Year 1 of the programme has, as required under the governing EU regulations, recently issued via his Knowledge Transfer Facilitator. This reimbursement includes a reduction to reflect non-completion of the Animal Health Measure (AHM) requirement of the Programme. His Knowledge Transfer Facilitator has confirmed the transfer of this reimbursement to the person named on 25/05/2018.

Departmental Investigations

475. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of the ongoing investigation into establishing the perpetrators of the illegal fire at Killery, County Sligo (details supplied); when farmers can expect penalties to be lifted and payments processed; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that these farmers have now taken action towards closing one of County Sligo's busiest walking trails, which is located on their holding, to the public until this situation is resolved; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23125/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The conditions relating to land eligibility under the BPS are set out annually in the Basic Payments Terms & Conditions Booklet as well as in the 2015 Guide to Land Eligibility booklet.

Where land has been burned, it is not in a state suitable for an agricultural activity such as grazing or cultivation and therefore it is not eligible, except where controlled burning is carried out. It is specified in the BPS Terms & Conditions that under the Wildlife Acts, growing vegetation cannot be burnt between 1st March and 31st August of any given year, on any land not yet cultivated. Enforcement of the Wildlife Acts is a matter for the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

While my Department is not responsible for the investigation of the actual causes of illegal burning such as occurred on Killery Mountain, it is responsible for determining the eligibility of land under the BPS and other area related schemes. In general terms, where the area determined to have been burned exceeds 3% of the eligible area declared, an administrative penalty of 1.5 times the area burned is applied. Where the applicant provides appropriate evidence that he/she was not involved in the burning of the affected lands, the administrative penalty may be waived. However, the burnt land remains ineligible for payment.

The Department wrote to the farmers concerned, including those on Killery Mountain, outlining that the burned land parcel(s) were ineligible for the purpose of BPS and had given rise to over-claims. The letters explained the options open to them including the right to a review and also requesting them to submit any relevant documentation.

My Department has been in contact with 33 farmers in relation to ineligible land due to burning on Killery Mountain. 29 of these farmers have lodged an appeal with my Department on this issue. 25 of the appeals have now been decided, and my Department has communicated these decisions directly to the farmers concerned and advised them of their right of appeal to

the Agriculture Appeals Office. A further 4 cases remain under review. To date, 11 appeals, 8 of which relate to Killery Mountain, have been lodged with the Appeals Office.

All things being equal the lands burnt illegally in 2017 are likely to be eligible in 2018. Those affected were informed accordingly and the updated eligible areas were provided at the time of application to on-line BPS applicants.

This year, press releases were issued in March and in May reminding farmers not to burn during the closed season, and not to include ineligible land in their applications. In addition discussions have been held with farmer representative bodies to further ensure clarity of message around this important issue.

Bord Iascaigh Mhara

476. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine further to Parliamentary Question Nos. 734 and 735 of 20 March 2018, when a reply from Bord Iascaigh Mhara will issue. [23127/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): I regret the delay in the Deputy receiving a response to Questions No. 734 and 735. I have contacted Bord Iascaigh Mhara and asked that a response be provided as soon as possible.

Agriculture Scheme Applications

477. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if a farmer (details supplied) with designated land will be accepted into the new environment scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23219/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): I understand the Deputy is referring to the new Hen Harrier Programme, which is a locally led initiative supported by my Department under the European Innovation Partnership measure of Ireland's Rural Development Programme. I can confirm from contact with the local project team that the person referred to is an applicant under the new Programme. Applications are reviewed on a month-by-month basis and ranked against pre-published selection criteria. The next selection round is coming up shortly and the application referred to will be considered again at that stage.

GLAS Appeals

478. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of a GLAS appeal by a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23226/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The person named was approved into GLAS 1 with a contract commencement date of 1 October 2015 and has received all payments due to date.

A penalty has been applied in this case due to an over declaration on a land parcel. The applicant has recently requested a review of this penalty and the case is currently being reviewed.

Teagasc Courses

479. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if there is a recognition of students with dyslexia with regard to passing exams for the green certificate (level 6) in agriculture; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23229/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Teagasc deliver the Green Cert on a fulltime, part-time and distance education basis. The content and delivery of the Green Cert is an operational matter for Teagasc. I understand that Teagasc endeavour to provide appropriate support and reasonable accommodation at exams where students have recognised learning difficulties based on the individual's needs assessment.

Agriculture Scheme Data

480. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of farmers accepted into the new environment scheme for farmers with designated land by farms under 10 ha, 10 to 15 ha, 15 to 20 ha and more than 20 ha, respectively; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23230/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): I understand the scheme referred to by the Deputy is the new Hen Harrier Programme, which is a locally led initiative supported by my Department under the European Innovation Partnership measure of Ireland's Rural Development Programme.

Recruitment into the Programme is done on a monthly basis by the Project Team and this process is expected to continue for several months yet. To date, the breakdown of farmers accepted into the Programme across all six SPA designated areas is as follows:

Designated land	No. of farmers
<10 hectares	68 farmers
10-15 hectares	61 farmers
15-20 hectares	47 farmers
>20 hectares	516 farmers
TOTAL	692 farmers

Agriculture Scheme Expenditure

481. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the amount allocated to the new environmental scheme for farmers with designated land; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23231/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): I presume the Deputy is referring to the new Hen Harrier Programme. This is a locally-led pilot project under the European Innovation Partnerships measure of the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020. It is not a Department scheme as such, and is not directly administered by my Department.

However, the project is fully funded through the Rural Development Plan and within that framework I have allocated a budget of €25 million for the Hen Harrier Programme.

Agriculture Schemes

482. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if the new environmental scheme for farmers with designated land is open to new applicants at present; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23232/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): I understand the Deputy is referring to the new Hen Harrier Programme which is a locally led initiative supported by my Department under the European Innovation Partnership measure of Ireland's Rural Development Programme. However, the new Programme is not directly administered by my Department and design and management are primarily matters for the local project team.

The Programme has been open for applications since the 8th December 2017, and is still open. Offers to eligible farmers are being made on a monthly basis and this will continue until all available places have been filled across the six SPA areas.

Agriculture Scheme Eligibility

483. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the criteria that determines eligibility for the new environmental scheme for farmers with designated land; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23233/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The Hen Harrier Programme is a locally-led pilot project under the European Innovation Partnerships measure of the Rural Development Programme, and is not directly administered by my Department. The design and management of the project are primarily matters for the local project team, who have consulted widely with farmers in designated areas in the development of the measures to be undertaken on the ground and associated payments.

The Eligibility criteria are set out in the Terms & Conditions of the programme and are listed below:

To be eligible for the Hen Harrier Programme applicants must be:

- 18 years or over on the date an expression of interest is received by the Hen Harrier Project Team.

- An Active farmer - the applicant must have submitted a current application for the Basic Payments Scheme which includes a declaration of all lands farmed. This is required in each year of the participant's contract.

- Farming at least one parcel containing qualifying lands within or partially within a Hen Harrier designated SPA.

The Terms & Conditions can be obtained from the Hen Harrier project team and are also available on their website www.henharrierproject.ie.

Felling Licences Applications

484. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of an application by a person (details supplied) for a felling licence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23251/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The person named applied for a General Felling Licence in May 2016. The applicant did not wish to re-plant the same site and was notified in June 2016 that a limited felling licence was required. An application for a limited felling licence was received in February 2017 and was granted in April 2017.

However one of the conditions of the licence was that an alternative site was planted in lieu of the area felled. Approval to plant the alternative site was issued in April 2017. An objection was received from a member of the public shortly thereafter. The appeal is now being considered and the felling licence and replanting approval are suspended pending the outcome of the appeal.

Basic Payment Scheme Data

485. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of applicants that were successful and unsuccessful, respectively under the Scottish derogation; the number of applications received that were from County Cavan; the number granted; the grounds used for refusal and granting of applications, respectively; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23279/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): A total of 2,122 successful applications were received under the Scottish Derogation measure under the Basic Payment Scheme. 1,301 applications were deemed to be unsuccessful.

In total, 145 applications were received under the Scottish Derogation measure of the Basic Payment Scheme from the county of Cavan, of which 87 applicants were successful.

The eligibility for Scottish Derogation applications was set out in the Terms and Conditions of the Scottish Derogation Scheme. Applicants who did not satisfy the eligibility criteria were deemed unsuccessful.

Departmental Contracts Data

486. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine 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; if contingency plans are in place if the company were to collapse; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21666/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Details of the outsourced services provided by the company to my Department were furnished to the Deputy in a response to a recent parliamentary question (Ref PQ 2309/2018).

The company has assured my Department that it is a viable operation on the basis of a number of actions taken to strengthen the balance sheet, reduce debt, increase the efficiency of the business and invest for the future. In this regard it launched a Rights Issue earlier in the year to raise approximately €700 million to reduce leverage and to fund investment over the coming years. The company has a strong management team in place with significant experience in delivering a high quality service to the Department.

As regards the twelve State Bodies under the aegis of my Department, the information requested is an operational matter for the State Bodies themselves. I have referred the Deputy's

question to the Agencies and have requested that a response should issue within 10 days.

My Department is currently examining approaches to development of contingency arrangements for these outsourced services.

Knowledge Transfer Programme

487. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason for the delay in issuing payment under the knowledge transfer scheme to a farmer (details supplied) in County Galway; when payment will issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23294/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Knowledge Transfer (KT) is one of a suite of measures included under the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 and involves the formation of knowledge transfer groups across the beef, dairy, equine, sheep, tillage and poultry sectors.

Participants attend group meetings and produce a Farm Improvement Plan in consultation with their KT Facilitator. For each year of the three year programme participants receive a payment of €750 for a primary sector and €375 for a secondary sector where all requirements of the programme have been met.

In relation to the person named, this case involved a change of ownership on the herd number notified to the Department on the 19th January 2018. The relevant verification checks on foot of this have been completed to ensure that this herd owner has complied with the provisions of the KT scheme and I can confirm that it is now cleared for payment. Payment is expected to issue shortly.

TB Eradication Scheme

488. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if his attention has been drawn to the TB epidemic on 18 farms in Ballyduff Upper, County Waterford; the way in which he plans to deal with the epidemic in isolated areas; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23368/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Notwithstanding the progress in the TB eradication programme in recent years, from time to time clusters of outbreaks - as can be expected with an infectious contagious disease - occur in defined geographical locations. 12 herds are currently experiencing a TB breakdown in the Ballyduff Upper area, Co. Waterford. The breakdowns commenced in Autumn/Winter 2017 and early Spring 2018. One herd has since gone clear. In total, 200 reactors have been removed from a total of 13 farms.

Epidemiological investigations conclude that spread from wildlife (badgers), contiguous neighbourhood spread, within-herd spread and in some cases, residual infection were the likely sources of infection. Fragmentation of holdings is a feature of farming in the area and also has the potential to contribute to the spread of infection. Deer are noted as being present but there is no evidence to date that they have any significant role to play in causing or sustaining bovine TB infection in cattle in the area.

Actions taken in the area include, the removal and slaughter of 200 reactors, the implementation of a contiguous testing programme in neighbouring herds, epidemiological investigations

for each herd in breakdown and forward/back tracing of animals moved completed for each herd. A wildlife programme is in operation to deal with any potential wildlife reservoir of infection and supplementary blood testing (gamma-interferon) was carried out where warranted.

My Department has dealt with this outbreak in an effective and efficient manner, including meeting with the local farming body and will continue to do so in all such cases. Department officials will continue to proactively manage the outbreak in the area in helping affected herds go clear in as short a timeframe as possible.

Live Exports

489. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if his attention has been drawn to violations of EU transport regulations by trucks transporting livestock from Rosslare (details supplied); if his Department is carrying out an investigation into these alleged violations; if sanctions will be imposed upon the companies involved; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23413/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): I am aware of the recent investigation by Eyes on Animals on a number of transporters from different countries leaving Rosslare port. I wish to assure the Deputy that in relation to the Irish trucks involved, a thorough investigation has taken place into the circumstances of the journeys undertaken. This was carried out in conjunction with the French authorities. Penalties have been applied to those who were found to have breached regulations.

Furthermore, I wish to assure the Deputy that the Irish authorities continue to apply stringent standards in respect of the welfare of animals during transport.

Forestry Sector

490. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine further to Parliamentary Question No. 165 of 22 February 2018, the status of the investigation into the compliance with EIA agriculture regulations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23414/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): An authorised officer of my Department met with the land owner on site on the 2nd February 2018. The up-rooting and clearance of trees was investigated and replanting will not be required.

A further investigation with regard to compliance with the EIA (Agriculture) Regulations, which came into force on 8th September 2011 was also carried out by my Department. An EIA screening application under these regulations had not been carried out by the owner. Details of the mitigating works to be undertaken to offset the site clearance have been issued and the works must be completed by the end of May, 2018.

The issue will be resolved when these mitigating works are carried out to the satisfaction of my Department.

GLAS Issues

491. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine

when a farmer (details supplied) who has complied with the terms and conditions of the GLAS scheme and paid their commonage adviser will receive the balancing payment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23494/18]

492. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if his attention has been drawn to the fact that an approved GLAS commonage adviser is refusing to submit a commonage management plan on behalf of a number of farmers, some of whom have paid in advance, causing a delay in GLAS payments; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23589/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): I propose to take Questions Nos. 491 and 492 together.

The person named was approved into GLAS 3 with a contract commencement date of 1 January 2017 and has received the 2017 advance payment.

The finalisation of a commonage management plan is a requirement for any GLAS participant claiming the Commonage action and its submission is entirely a matter between them and their advisor. The person named may wish to contact their advisor to ensure that the relevant commonage management plan is finalised. I am pleased to note that these plans are being finalised on the online CMP system on an ongoing basis with over 150 plans finalised in the past few days. Any queries that individual Advisors may have can be raised by email at glascommonages@agriculture.gov.ie.

Milk Prices

493. **Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his views on the current volatility of milk prices. [23640/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): As the Deputy is aware, the Irish dairy market, following on from broader EU and international trends performed strongly in 2017 following a period of low prices in 2015 and 2016. Whilst prices have eased somewhat recently the overall dairy sector is now in a much better place overall than it has been in recent years.

I am very conscious of the pressure volatility in dairy markets can exert on farmers and I can assure the Deputy that I am committed to utilising all measures at our disposal, including EU market measures such as intervention, aids to private storage and exceptional market measures, as necessary. Whilst there is a significant overhang of intervention stocks of skimmed milk powder in the EU, there has been a substantial reduction of in excess of 70,000 tonnes of SMP in the last number of tenders for the sale of intervention stocks ran by the European Commission. This is, I believe, a positive step in dealing with these stocks and reflects an overall stabilisation of the market for SMP.

Ireland is strongly positioned as a competitive producer of dairy products. It has enviable natural resources, adaptable and resilient producers, a strong international reputation, an effective dairy processing sector and a strong core of research infrastructure and expertise. All of these factors are necessary to mitigate the effects of volatility of milk prices at farmgate level. My Department will continue to work with our partners in the industry to develop measures which can minimise the effects of price volatility in the future and ensure sustainable growth.

494. **Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will reconsider permitting grant applications for the development of cattle underpasses under the TAMS scheme on the grounds of health and safety. [23641/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The TAMS II Scheme has been very successful to date in terms of uptake with the number of approvals that have issued exceeding 14,500. All of these approvals represent committed expenditure under the TAMS II measure of the Rural Development Programme 2014 - 2020.

Payments under the Scheme to date have exceeded €56m and approvals and payments continue to issue on an ongoing basis for the comprehensive list of investments already included in the suite of seven existing TAMS measures.

Until the remaining outstanding approvals for works are completed and a payment claim submitted or the outstanding approvals lapse these cases represent potential payments and a budgetary provision must be maintained for their payment. There are no proposals at present to extend the list of investments available under TAMS to include underpasses.

Teagasc Administration

495. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of a green certificate for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23702/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The details requested by the Deputy are an operational matter for Teagasc who deliver the Green Cert.

The Deputy’s question has been passed on by my Department to Teagasc who have been requested to respond to the Deputy within 10 days.

Basic Payment Scheme Data

496. **Deputy Martin Kenny** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of hectares deemed eligible for basic payments in 2016 and 2017; the average payment per hectare; the amount that was raised through degressivity here in 2015, 2016 and 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23769/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The information requested by the Deputy is currently being collated and will be sent directly to the Deputy when it is available.

Waste Management Regulations

497. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the status of the regulation of scrap metal here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23752/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): While regulation of the scrap metal industry or the second hand precious metals industry is not a matter within the remit of my Department, the regulation of waste activities is,

of course, relevant to the industry. Such activities require authorisation in accordance with the Waste Management Act 1996 and depending on the authorisation required, these activities are controlled either by the Environmental Protection Agency or by local authorities, as competent authorities nominated by the State to implement such legislation. The purpose of these controls is to regulate the collection, recovery or disposal of waste in order to protect the environment. An examination of the waste licensing and permitting legislation was undertaken in 2014 in the context of the rise in metal theft to ensure all necessary provisions, particularly those relating to traceability, were in place to avoid situations that might be exploited by criminal elements. In order to improve traceability of waste received and to counter the trade in stolen metal, an amendment to the Waste Management (Facility Permit and Registration) Regulations 2007 was introduced in 2014 to create the following additional requirements on all permitted facilities receiving/purchasing waste:

- require the production of proof of identity and current address of the person supplying the material,

- require records to be kept of the registration number and waste collection permit number of the delivery vehicle,

- require that records be kept describing the materials, time and date of sale, weight and amount paid, and

- require a signed statement by the person supplying the material that they are the lawful owner of the material or have the consent of the lawful owner to sell the material.

The improved traceability provisions outlined above are regarded as proportionate and practical measures to curtail the ability of those engaged in the theft of metals to dispose of these materials for profit, while not imposing an undue administrative burden on the waste management sector.

Broadband Service Provision

498. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the status of a broadband connection for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23167/18]

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. 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 premises 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. It is therefore included in the State Intervention Area under the National Broadband Plan (NBP).

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

With regards to the nearby rollout referred to by the Deputy, decisions made by private telecommunication operators relating to the rollout and siting of infrastructure to provide high

speed broadband services throughout Ireland are undertaken on a commercial basis by competing service providers operating in a liberalised market. I have no statutory role or function to intervene in the commercial decisions of private operators, and therefore cannot direct operators regarding infrastructure installation or delivery of services.

I fully recognise the importance of availability of high speed connectivity for all premises in Ireland and sincerely appreciate the frustration for communities and businesses that do not currently have access to this level of connectivity. Delivering connectivity to the 542,000 premises that fall within the State led intervention under the NBP remains a priority for me and my Department will engage with the winning bidder to ensure the most efficient deployment as part of the contract.

For those premises currently awaiting access to high speed broadband, practical initiatives are being undertaken 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>.

Waste Disposal

499. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the steps he is taking to reduce plastic waste; if his Department has closely liaised with the large grocery retailers in this regard; if single use plastic straws will be banned here by the end of 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23218/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): Ireland fully embraces the ambition of the new strategy European Strategy for Plastics and I am committed to going beyond it. Already many of the measures recommended in the Strategy, such as extended producer responsibility schemes, the landfill and plastic bag levies, as well as robust enforcement, are well embedded into Irish resource management. The national recycling list and recycling ambassadors' programme are encouraging people to consider unwanted materials as a valued resource rather than a waste.

In relation to plastic packaging, REPAK manages the collection and recycling of 80% of packaging on the market. Fees paid by their members are based on the amount of packaging the members place on the market and this incentivises them to reduce packaging. REPAK also employs specialist packaging technologists to optimise packaging design and minimise waste.

I understand that REPAK is working particularly closely with the large grocery retailers on a number of proposals aimed at improving their approach to packaging. In addition, I will engage again with the large grocery retailers looking for their commitment to reduce non-recyclable plastic packaging in their stores.

I have also welcomed new proposals by the European Commission to tackle plastic waste,

in particular plastic single use items, and I have urged both the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers to progress these proposals as soon as possible.

Advertising Regulation

500. **Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if there is a specific set of guidelines or requirements for agencies when delivering circular advertisements or literature to households in terms of content, display of publishers, language and material some might find offensive; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23282/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): The Advertising Standards Authority for Ireland (ASAI) is the independent self-regulatory body set up and financed by the advertising industry which promotes standards of marketing communications including advertising both online and offline, promotional marketing and direct marketing.

The ASAI’s Code of Standards for Advertising and Marketing Communications in Ireland applies to commercial marketing communications and to sales promotions that promote the sales of goods or services.

Non-commercial marketing communications, i.e. those which express the advertiser’s position on a political, religious, industrial relations, social or aesthetic matter or an issue of public concern, are not subject to the Code.

As the designated postal service provider, An Post has advised that it has internal guidelines that it adheres to for the purposes of vetting the content of these items which are similar to those used by other postal administrations.

There are Terms and Conditions which apply to all An Post customers who use this service. These can be found at:

<http://www.anpost.ie/NR/rdonlyres/17FDFB6F-6116-407D-87A0-E3A065903FB4/0/290513PublicityPostTermsandConditions1.pdf>

Information in respect of the other bodies and agencies under the aegis of my Department is a day to day matter for those organisations. I will, however, request the relevant Agencies and bodies under the aegis of my Department to respond directly to the Deputy in the matter.

Departmental Contracts

501. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment 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; if contingency plans are in place if the company were to collapse; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21666/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): Capita Business Support Services Ireland, trading as Eircode, was awarded a 10 year contract in December 2013 to develop, implement, maintain and promote the use of the National Postcode System “Eircode”.

As part of normal contract oversight arrangements, Capita has assured my Department that their current financial position will not impact on their capacity to deliver their commitments under the Postcode Management Licence Holder (PMLH) contract. Within this contract there are mechanisms, which include an Exit Plan that allows for the appointment of a replacement PMLH, where necessary.

In addition, Capita, as the parent company of Capita Business Support Services Ireland, as part of the contract to operate Eircode, has provided a parent company guarantee.

My Department continues to work closely with senior executives of Capita and will update its contingency planning if or when required.

Inland Fisheries

502. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment further to Parliamentary Question No. 348 of 1 May 2018, if eel fishery owners that rented or leased their eel fishery or that were unable to fish for eel due to illness or old age are to be excluded in the proposed support scheme (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23310/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Seán Kyne): The purpose of the proposed eel support scheme is to provide a measure of payment to fishermen who were licenced by the State. Consultations with the Revenue Commissioners in relation to the scope of the proposed measure are on-going. The activity mentioned by the Deputy would appear to be based on private commercial arrangements to which the State is not a party.

National Broadband Plan Implementation

503. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if fibre optic broadband will be extended in an area (details supplied). [23315/18]

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. 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 premises 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. It is therefore included in the State Intervention Area under the National Broadband Plan (NBP).

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

With regard to the rollout of broadband infrastructure, decisions made by private telecommunication operators relating to the rollout and siting of infrastructure to provide high speed broadband services throughout Ireland are undertaken on a commercial basis by competing service providers operating in a liberalised market. I have no statutory role or function to in-

tervene in the commercial decisions of private operators, and therefore cannot direct operators regarding infrastructure installation or delivery of services.

I fully recognise the importance of availability of high speed connectivity for all premises in Ireland and sincerely appreciate the frustration for communities and businesses that do not currently have access to this level of connectivity. Delivering connectivity to the 542,000 premises that fall within the State led intervention under the NBP remains a priority for me and my Department will engage with the winning bidder to ensure the most efficient deployment as part of the contract.

For those premises currently awaiting access to high speed broadband, practical initiatives are being undertaken 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.

A list of Broadband Officers, is available on my Department's website at <https://www.dcae.gov.ie/en-ie/communications/topics/Broadband/national-broadband-plan/latest-news/Pages/Broadband-Officers-Workshop.aspx>.

Waste Disposal Charges

504. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment further to Parliamentary Question No. 339 of 1 May 2018, which was further to Parliamentary Question Nos. 422 and 430 of 5 December 2017, the status of the new funding proposal for families with large amounts of medical waste; when the scheme will be introduced; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23605/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): In line with the commitments set out in *A Resource Opportunity - Waste Management Policy in Ireland*, published in 2012, and in the interest of encouraging further waste prevention and greater recycling, flat-rate fees for kerbside household waste collection are being phased out over the period autumn 2017 to autumn 2018, as customers contracts come up for renewal. The necessary regulatory steps have been put in place to give effect to this measure. It is worth noting that this measure is not 'new' for about half of kerbside household waste customers, who are already on an incentivised usage pricing plan, i.e., a plan which contains a per lift or a weight related fee.

As announced in mid-2017, mandatory per kilogramme 'pay by weight' charging is not being introduced. Allowing for a range of charging options, which encourage householders to reduce and separate their waste, provides flexibility to waste collectors to develop various service-price offerings that suit different household circumstances.

The Price Monitoring Group has considered eight months of data to date. While fluctuations in prices and service offerings have been observed, the overall trend is relative price stability. The Price Monitoring Group has reported that there are currently 9 different types of price models on the market. The main price examples include a service charge plus charge per bin lift, with an excess per kg charge, and a service charge plus per kg weight charge. The most popular

service offering now is the ‘service charge including weight allowance, plus per kg charge for excess above allowance’.

An annual support of €75 per person is being made available for persons with lifelong or long-term medical incontinence. This will help people meet the average annual cost for the disposal of medical incontinence products. My Department is in discussion with the Department of Health, the Health Service Executive, and the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner regarding the administrative details and arrangements of the support, as well as engaging with the relevant patient stakeholders. I can assure the Deputy that I am committed to finalising the details for this support as soon as possible.

Fishing Licences

505. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his plans to reduce the prices charged by Inland Fisheries Ireland for the purchase of licences and permits for angling on rivers and inland fisheries including day permits and those of longer duration; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23715/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Seán Kyne): Currently there is no licence required or fee payable when fishing for trout and the numerous array of coarse fish species (pike, bream, roach, trench etc.) on State owned fisheries in Ireland. In addition, no licence or fee is required for sea angling. This covers the vast majority of angling activity in Ireland. This contrasts with the significant majority of other countries world-wide where licence fees are payable for all angling activity. Anglers of all ages, therefore, currently have significant opportunity to participate in angling without cost.

In addition, certain fisheries, in the ownership of the ESB, and defined as private fisheries, attract a permit fee. A formal agreement was entered into by Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) to manage 17 of the ESB’s fisheries in the Midlands. This agreement included an arrangement for IFI to use the permit fees, due to ESB as fishery owners, from these fisheries to fund their management costs, which are additional to IFI’s costs for managing State owned fisheries. ESB charge similar fees for the Lower Shannon and Mulkear fisheries.

The practice of charging permit fees is long established and angling clubs that licence a fishery from the State may also charge a permit for anglers who are not a member of the club.

The only two species for which anglers are currently required to hold and pay for a licence are salmon and sea trout. There are a range of licence options available, and the price structure for licences facilitates broad participation in salmon and sea trout angling at economic rates.

Changes in licence fees are considered annually and normally reflect movement in the Consumer Price Index. In this regard, reflecting the prevailing economic conditions, a reduction in fees for all licence categories was introduced for the 2012 fishing season, and these reduced levels have been maintained by me as Minister. I will again review the relevant fees this year.

Annual permit fees on ESB fisheries managed by IFI amount to 86c per week for adults, 48c per week for senior citizens and 38c per week for juveniles. Permits for shorter periods are also available. On average, permit fees account for an annual income of €120,000 and the cost to IFI to protect, develop, manage and conserve these fisheries is considerably in excess of this.

I would also advise, regarding salmon and sea trout licences, that a fisheries conservation component was applied to all licence fees in 2007, as part of a suite of conservation measures for the management of wild fisheries. This component represents 50% of the licence fee, and

income generated from this component is ring-fenced by Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) for the rehabilitation of salmon habitats and conservation measures throughout the country.

All of the proceeds of the salmon and sea trout licence fees income are reinvested, by IFI, in the conservation, protection and development of wild fisheries habitats and stocks directly, or through the Salmon Conservation Fund scheme, with a particular emphasis on prioritised investment in those rivers in most need of rehabilitation.

Similarly, a significant portion of the permit revenue collected by IFI in relation to the management of ESB fisheries is redistributed into the catchments by way of the Midlands Fisheries Fund, which provides funding to angling clubs, community groups etc., to enhance those fisheries

Waste Disposal Charges

506. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if new requirements are being introduced to require waste companies to charge for recyclable material collected in the recyclables bin later in 2018; and if so, the approximate timeline for same. [23797/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): There are no plans to introduce a requirement for waste collection companies to charge for collecting recycling.

Ministerial Transport

507. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the number of ministerial cars or vehicles in operation in each of the past six years; and the costs associated with same. [24028/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): Under new arrangements agreed by Government in March 2011, Ministers, with the exception of the Taoiseach, Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality who retained their State car and Garda Drivers, could appoint two civilian drivers to drive their personal car, and claim mileage and related costs. These arrangements were already in place for Ministers of State.

The following Table shows the number of cars in use in my Department for Ministerial duties, and the associated costs which have been incurred by my Department in the period 2012 to date. These costs include the salary and subsistence costs of civilian drivers, together with the mileage and related costs paid to the Minister and Minister of State.

Year	Personal Cars for Ministerial duties	Costs Incurred
2018	2	€86,708.58
2017	2	€191,104.17
2016	2	€164,431.94
2015	2	€130,558.46
2014	2	€162,860.30
2013	2	€197,510.27

Year	Personal Cars for Ministerial duties	Costs Incurred
2012	2	€181,698.27

Road Safety Authority Campaigns

508. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will consider running an RSA safety campaign during the summer months in view of the increased prevalence of scrambler and quad bikes in local parks; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23712/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As safety campaigns are a matter for the Road Safety Authority (RSA), I have referred the question to the Authority for direct reply. I would ask the Deputy to contact my office if a response is not received within 10 days.

However, I would also note that the RSA's remit covers only road safety and does not extend to recreational activities in other locations, such as public spaces or local parks, which are not on the public - or indeed private - roads.

Rail Network Expansion

509. **Deputy Declan Breathnach** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to extend the DART and rail short hop zone to Laytown, County Meath; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that Laytown is closer to Dublin city centre than Kilcoole, County Wicklow which is already included in the rail short hop fare zone (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23102/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, I have responsibility for policy and for the overall funding of public transport and sustainable transport infrastructure. The National Transport Authority (NTA) is responsible for the development and implementation of public transport and sustainable transport infrastructure in the Greater Dublin Area (GDA) including DART infrastructure, services, fare structures and pricing.

In light of the NTA's responsibility in this area, I have referred the Deputy's question to the Authority for a more detailed reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

Driver Licence Renewals

510. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the way in which a person (details supplied) who wishes to travel can renew their driver licence; and if special arrangements can be made in these circumstances. [23123/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): This is an operational matter for the Road Safety Authority, which has statutory responsibility for the National Driver Licensing Service. I have therefore referred the Question to the Authority for direct reply. I

would ask the Deputy to contact my office if a response has not been received within ten days.

Irish Aviation Authority

511. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if his attention has been drawn to the fact that the Irish Aviation Authority is no longer recognising written examination certificates issued by the UK CAA authorised examiners held by many student pilots in training to become qualified pilots (details supplied); the reason this change has occurred; if this is compliant with European Aviation Safety Agency regulations; if his attention has been drawn to the distress this matter is causing student pilots; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23149/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I am advised by the Irish Aviation Authority (IAA), which is the State regulator of pilot training and licencing, that it has not changed its practices in relation to mutual recognition of pilot training certifications.

The IAA's has explained that it accepts a complete set of European Aviation Safety Agency Private Pilot Licence (EASA PPL) examinations carried out under the direct control of another EU Member State, subject to satisfactory verification. This is as advised on the IAA's web site. Ireland continues to accept UK EASA PPL theoretical exams in support of a Irish PPL licence application, subject to a verification process. This verification process requires that the National Aviation Authority (NAA) in the relevant Member State to confirm the dates and results of all exams taken by the applicant directly with the IAA. This direct verification of qualifications is the standard expected by NAAs. In the interest of safety, the IAA does not accept PPL examinations unless the required verification, to the satisfaction of the IAA, is forthcoming from the NAA responsible for the oversight of those examinations.

Pilot Training Courses

512. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if the Irish Aviation Authority will continue to fully recognise all training undertaken at pilot training organisations that transfer airfield status from registered training facility to the newer EASA DTO (details supplied). [23150/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I am advised by the Irish Aviation Authority, which is the State regulator for pilot training and licensing, that it very recently wrote to the proprietor of the organisation in question (on 22/05/18). That letter, I am informed, explained the impact of the changes at EU level and confirmed that the organisation is free to operate according to the terms of its recent Declared Training Organisation declaration, under the responsibility of the "responsible person", a suitably qualified Chief Flying Instructor (now known as a Head of Training) and suitably qualified flight instructors.

Rail Services Data

513. **Deputy Noel Rock** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport to set out the details of Luas usership; and the number of persons that enter and exit at each stop by month and year. [23173/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The National Transport Authority (NTA) is responsible for the collection and publication of statistics relating to

public transport and I have forwarded the Deputy's question to the NTA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a response within ten working days.

Driver Licences

514. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if media reports on the expenditure of €2 million by the Road Safety Authority in the design and building of an online application system for driver licences which involved the mandatory use of the public services card are accurate; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23196/18]

515. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if media reports of expenditure of €2 million by the Road Safety Authority in the design and building of an online application system for driver licences which involved the mandatory use of the public services card are accurate; if a new online application system is now being implemented; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23197/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 514 and 515 together.

The media reports were totally misleading. The expenditure referred to was incurred during the development by the Road Safety Authority of an online application system for driving licences. While the roll-out of this system has been delayed, the system is going ahead and the expenditure is not wasted. There was at no point any question of the system not going ahead. It is now due for implementation from 5 June 2018, rather than the original intended date of 30 April 2018.

It will be necessary for users of the online system to have a Public Services Card (PSC). This is because any online system must be underpinned by a robust 'real world' system of identity verification, which is in turn supportable through an electronic system. The Government's MyGovID portal provides this ID verification system for online applications, and is dependent on the PSC.

The PSC is not however mandatory for obtaining a driving licence - it will still be possible for applicants to apply through an office of the National Driver Licensing Service (NDLS) using the ID verification documents already accepted. People who apply at an NDLS office may also use a PSC as ID if they wish.

National Vehicle and Driver File Access

516. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport to outline the arrangement in place between his Department and an organisation (details supplied) with regard to the integrated information data service shared members' database operated by the organisation; the information in the database; the information provided by his Department; the position on access to the information on the database; if a non-member of the organisation has access to the database; if not, whether the same information can be accessed in another form; if there is an exchange of money between the organisation and his Department relating to the database or the information contained therein; the body that retains ownership and control over the database; the frequency with which his Department provides information to the organisation for the purposes of updating the database; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23204/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Motor insurers are granted access to the penalty point data on my Department's National Vehicle and Driver File (NVDF) under Section 5(1) of the Road Traffic Act 2014. There is a signed agreement in place between my Department and the organisation concerned for the provision of penalty point data. The organisation in turn has signed agreements in place with insurance companies for the provision of penalty point data.

The Integrated Information Data Service (IIDS) is a centralised access point created and administered by the organisation concerned for its members. The IIDS does not store any penalty point data. The IIDS is the conduit through which the organisation's members query penalty point information from the NVDF. The organisation itself does not have access to query such data directly from the NVDF.

The data provided consists of the penalty point offence description, number of penalty points applied for the offence, date of the offence, start date of offence on the NVDF, the total number of days remaining for the offence; and the total number of penalty points applied.

Penalty Point Data is exchanged between the Department and the organisation via a secure web service interface mechanism which operates the IIDS. Information is made available in real-time to the organisation's members on a per query basis, with the system available 22 hours each day (unavailable for a period for resynchronisation of the web services system with the NVDF database). The organisation incurred a once-off charge for the development of this service. No charge is made to the organisation, or its members, for access to the NVDF data via this service.

The organisation's members do not have exclusive access rights to the NVDF. Penalty Point data on the NVDF is available to all vehicle insurers registered with the Central Bank of Ireland whether they are a member of the organisation or not. Any insurer can seek access to the same information by making an application to my Department. In such instances, similar to those of the organisation, once-off set up costs may be incurred by the insurer concerned.

Driver Licences

517. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport to outline his plans to designate Northern Ireland as a country of birth on driver licences for persons born in counties Antrim, Armagh, Down, Fermanagh, Derry and Tyrone; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23223/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The question of how to designate place of birth in these circumstances was considered last year by my Department and by the Road Safety Authority.

Previously, driving licences had designated 'Northern Ireland' as place of birth in such cases. However, it was decided that practice should follow that used on Irish passports, where 'place of birth' is given as the county of birth for all people born on the island of Ireland.

I have no plans for further change in this area.

Taxi Licences

518. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport to set out in tabular form the number of taxi licence holders who have completed form S15N and the

section 15 nomination process in each of the years 2014 to 2017; and the number of taxi licence holders by county. [23237/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The regulation of the small public service vehicle (SPSV) industry, including the administration of the section 15 nomination process and the licensing of vehicles, is a matter for the National Transport Authority (NTA) under the provisions of the *Taxi Regulation Act 2013*. Accordingly, I have referred your question to the NTA for direct reply to you. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a response within 10 working days.

Departmental Contracts

519. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport 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]

520. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport to outline 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; if contingency plans are in place if the company were to collapse; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21666/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 519 and 520 together.

With regard the questions raised by the Deputy CAPITA IB were engaged by my Department in 2014 following a European wide competitive tendering process, for the development of a computer based system for Seafarers Certification. I am satisfied that the necessary controls are in place, to allow the Department to continue to operate the system, should the need arise. Additional controls are in place to ensure that my Department can continue to support and develop the system in the future with alternative suppliers.

With regard any of the agencies under my Departments remit please note that I have forwarded the questions to each agency for direct response. If you do not hear from them within 10 working days please contact my private office.

Rural Transport Programme Funding

521. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport to set out the estimated cost of increasing the funding for the Rural Transport Programme by 5%. [23370/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The total allocation in 2018 to the Rural Transport Programme (RTP), which now operates under the “Local Link” brand, is €14.996 million.

This is the confirmed RTP allocation for this year, and any percentage increases over whatever timeframe, using whatever basis, may be calculated from it. However, as I have previously advised the Deputy, I would caution that whatever calculations the Deputy might use, such

figures would only be speculative. Future funding levels for the programme will be subject to the annual Estimate and Budgetary processes.

National Transport Authority

522. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport to outline the estimated cost of making all public transport services fully wheelchair accessible; and the breakdown of the cost including upgrading existing vehicles, upgrading existing infrastructure including bus stops and train stations and staffing costs. [23371/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport I have responsibility for policy and overall funding in relation to public transport.

Under the Dublin Transport Authority Act 2008 the National Transport Authority (NTA) has functional responsibility for promoting the development of an integrated, accessible public transport network.

In light of the NTA's responsibilities in this matter, I have forwarded the Deputy's question to the NTA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a response within ten working days.

Road Projects Status

523. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport to set out in tabular form the planned capital spend for 2018 and the intended allocation for 2019 for construction of the A5 motorway as contained in the current projected capital expenditure figures. [23372/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The planning and implementation of the A5 upgrade project is the responsibility of the Northern Ireland authorities.

The current funding arrangements in relation to the A5 are governed by the Stormont House Agreement and Implementation Plan - A Fresh Start. This Agreement reaffirmed the Government's commitment to provide funding of £50 million for the A5 project and committed an additional £25 million towards the cost of Phase 1 of the project (Newbuildings to north of Strabane).

The funding allocated to my Department as part of the Capital Plan Review last year includes financial provision for meeting the Government's commitment regarding the A5 in three £25 million (sterling) tranches over the period 2019 to 2021. The project is the subject of legal proceedings at present.

Tourism Ireland Funding

524. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport to set down the estimated full year cost of restoring funding to Tourism Ireland to 2008 levels. [23373/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Tourism Ireland is

funded through the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport and the Department for the Economy in Northern Ireland. Tourism Ireland's funding from the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport in 2018 amounts to €42,492,000 in 2018 compared to €53,639,000 in 2008. Accordingly the full year cost of restoring funding to the 2008 figure would be €11,147,000.

Tourism Ireland Funding

525. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport to set out in tabular form the allocation for Tourism Ireland in each of the years 2011 to 2017; the allocation for 2018; and the planned allocation for 2019. [23374/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Tourism Ireland is funded through the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport and the Department for the Economy in Northern Ireland. Tourism Ireland's funding from the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport in each of the years from 2011 to 2018, inclusive, is set out in the following table. The allocation for 2019 is subject to the annual estimates discussions with the Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform.

Year	Pay	Non-Pay	Tourism Marketing Fund	Total Funding
2011	€9,182,000	€7,824,000	€34,942,000	€51,948,000
2012	€9,067,000	€7,429,000	€29,335,000	€45,831,000
2013	€8,800,000	€7,049,000	€28,445,000	€44,294,000
2014	€8,576,000	€6,684,000	€28,363,000	€43,623,000
2015	€8,753,000	€6,005,000	€25,992,000	€40,750,000
2016	€8,911,000	€5,519,000	€25,106,000	€39,536,000
2017	€9,082,000	€5,519,000	€25,706,000	€40,307,000
2018	€9,267,000	€5,519,000	€27,706,000	€42,492,000

Tourism Ireland Funding

526. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport to set out the estimated full year cost of increasing funding to Tourism Ireland by 1%, 2%, 3% and 5%, respectively. [23375/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Tourism Ireland is funded through the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport and the Department for the Economy in Northern Ireland. Funding from the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport in 2018 amounts to €42,492,000. Accordingly:

- a 1% increase would cost €424,920
- a 2% increase would cost €849,840
- a 3% increase would cost €1,274,760
- a 5% increase would cost €2,124,600.

Local Improvement Scheme Funding

527. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport to outline the level of funding expended on the local improvement scheme in each of the years 2010 to 2017; the associated number of projects supported in each of those years; the average payment made in each of those years; the allocation for 2018; and the level of funding expected to be allocated on the scheme in 2019. [23376/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Due to the major cut-backs in roads funding resulting from the financial crisis it was necessary for my Department to cease making separate allocations to local authorities in respect of the Local Improvement Scheme (LIS) in 2012. Details of LIS allocations before 2012 are included in the Regional and Local Road Grant Payment booklets which are available in the Dáil Library.

No provision was made for grants for LIS in 2012. In the period 2013 to 2017 local authorities had the option of using a proportion of their Discretionary Grant for LIS should they wish to do so. The decision on whether to allocate funding for LIS and the management of the allocation process was a matter for each local authority.

Minister Ring's Department is now the lead Department regarding the LIS having launched a scheme in 2017 and allocated further funding in 2018.

Road Improvement Schemes

528. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport to set out the estimated full year cost of increasing funding to secondary roads improvement schemes by 1%, 2%, 3% and 5%, respectively. [23377/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As Minister for Transport, Tourism & Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national (includes both national primary and national secondary routes) roads programme. The planning, design and implementation of individual road projects is a matter for Transport Infrastructure Ireland under the Roads Acts 1993-2015 in conjunction with the local authorities concerned. Within its capital budget, the assessment and prioritisation of individual projects is a matter in the first instance for TII in accordance with Section 19 of the Roads Act.

Noting the above position, I have referred the Deputy's question to TII for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you don't receive a reply within 10 working days.

Transport Infrastructure Ireland Projects

529. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport to outline the estimated cost of completing the next stage of all regional or secondary roads projects under construction or in planning. [23378/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As Minister for Transport, Tourism & Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme. The planning, design and implementation of individual road projects is a matter for Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) under the Roads Acts 1993-2015 in conjunction with the local authorities concerned. Within the budget available to it, the allocation of funding to individual projects is a matter for TII.

Noting the above position, I have referred the Deputy's question in relation to national secondary roads to TII for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you don't receive a reply

within 10 working days.

The improvement and maintenance of regional and local roads is the statutory responsibility of the relevant local authority in accordance with the provisions of Section 13 of the Roads Act 1993. Works on those roads are funded from the Council's own resources supplemented by State road grants. Each local authority is the contracting authority for the purpose of implementation of regional and local road improvement projects.

My Department is committed to providing grant funding to 13 projects at present under the capital investment plan. The current status and estimated grant commitment for each of these projects is set out in the following table.

Capital Plan Regional and Local Road Projects	DTTas Grant€m	CurrentStatus
Dingle Relief Road - Phase 4	4	At construction
Bettystown to Laytown Link Road	5	At planning stage
Adamstown & Nangor Road Upgrade	18	At Construction
Sallins By-Pass/Osberstown	57	At Construction
Shannon Crossing Bridge at Killaloe	16	At land acquisition stage
Athy Southern Distributor Road	34	Land acquisition & advance works
Portlaoise Southern Relief Road	7	At tender stage
Sligo Eastern Garavogue Link Road	18	Land acquisition & advance works
Sligo Western Distributor road	11	Land Acquisition & advance works
Tralee Northern Relief Road	11	Detailed Appraisal
R498 Latteragh Realignment	15	At planning stage
Killaloe Bypass/R494 Upgrade	34	At land acquisition stage
Coonagh to Knockalisheen	42	At land acquisition & advance works

Roads Maintenance Funding

530. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the allocation for the upgrade and maintenance of regional and secondary roads over each of the past ten years; and the expected allocation for the upgrade and maintenance of these roads for 2018. [23379/18]

537. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the cost of maintenance in each of the years 2012 to 2017 and to date in 2018 on national roads; and the expected spend in 2019. [23387/18]

538. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the cost

of maintenance in each of the years 2012 to 2017 and to date 2018 on regional and local roads; and the expected spend in 2019. [23388/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 530, 537 and 538 together.

The improvement and maintenance of regional and local roads is the statutory responsibility of the relevant local authority in accordance with the provisions of Section 13 of the Roads Act 1993. Works on those roads are funded from the Council's own resources supplemented by State road grants. Details of the regional and local road grant allocations and payments to local authorities are outlined in the regional and local road grant booklets which are available in the Dáil Library.

The tables included in the payment and allocation booklets outline expenditure by type of grant programme. For the Deputy's information an explanation of the purpose of the main road Regional and Local Road Grant Programmes is set out below:

Restoration Maintenance (RM): The purpose of the RM grant is to protect the structural integrity of the road by way of surface dressing through the sealing of the road surface. The purpose of restoration maintenance is to maintain the asset before it requires improvement.

Restoration Improvement Grant (RI): The RI grant programme is the main road strengthening programme and caters for surface restoration, pavement overlay works, complete road rehabilitation works and for drainage works where required.

Discretionary Grant (DG): Councils have discretion in spending these grants for improvement and maintenance works subject to selecting from a list of eligible works. However Councils are requested to prioritise projects which involve strengthening works, remedying road defects, winter maintenance and drainage works.

Bridge Rehabilitation (BR): This programme allows local authorities to apply for monies to undertake bridge rehabilitation works.

Safety Improvement Works (BS) This programme allows local authorities to apply for monies to undertake safety improvement works.

This year ring-fenced funding is being made available for **Community Involvement Scheme (CIS)** and a **Drainage Programme**. The CIS facilitates community involvement in repair and improvement of roads while the purpose of the **Drainage Grant** is to promote network resilience.

Specific Grant and Strategic Grants: The Department no longer seeks annual applications from local authorities in respect of the Specific (road improvement schemes costing up to €5 million.) and Strategic (improvement schemes costing over €5 million.) grant programmes. Instead it considers projects on a case by case basis taking into account the availability of funding and the outcome of project appraisals.

The total draw down of grant funding to date in 2018 is €55 million.

As regards national roads, within its annual budget, allocations to individual local authorities is a matter for Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII). I have, therefore, referred the Deputy's Questions to TII for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you don't receive a reply within ten working days.

In relation to 2019 expenditure on national, regional and local road maintenance, the alloca-

tions will be decided as part of the annual Estimates process.

Cycling Facilities Funding

531. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the allocation for public cycle lanes over each of the past ten years; the breakdown of maintenance on existing cycle lanes and spend on new cycle lanes; and the expected allocation for 2019. [23380/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): In response to the Deputy's question, I wish to refer the Deputy to my previous reply in response to Dáil Question number 594 on 13 February 2018 from the Deputy on a similar question.

Over recent years, Exchequer investment in cycling infrastructure has been made under a number of different programmes and schemes.

The table below sets out the combined investment that occurred under the National Cycle Network programme and the Active Travel Towns programme (both of which commenced in 2012), and the Smarter Travel Areas programme (which commenced in 2009). Projects funded under the Active Travel Towns programme and Smarter Travel Areas programme involved integrated initiatives across a number of aspects of active/smarter travel and incorporated measures such as investment in cycle lanes, bike parking, footpaths, traffic calming measures, shared streets and other interventions that encourage and support modal shift to walking and cycling. In this context it is not possible to isolate specific expenditure on cycling infrastructure alone.

In addition to the funding set out in the table, since 2010 my Department has also provided funding to the National Transport Authority (NTA) for allocation under the Sustainable Transport Measures Grants (STMG) Programme and the Regional Cities Programme to implement sustainable transport projects, including providing cycling infrastructure, in the Greater Dublin Area and the regional cities of Cork, Galway, Limerick and Waterford.

Please see attached correspondence from the NTA setting out the expenditure by year under cycling and walking for the Greater Dublin Area and the Regional Cities for the years 2011 to 2017 inclusive also in response to Dáil Question number 594 on 13 February 2018.

Looking to the future and following the recent mid-term review of the Capital Plan, investment of over €110 million will develop cycling and walking infrastructure in the Greater Dublin Area and Regional Cities over the next four years (2018-2021). This programme will provide safe alternative active travel routes to help alleviate congestion by providing viable alternatives and connectivity with existing public transport infrastructure.

In addition to these cycling-specific investments, BusConnects, that will involve re-configuring the bus network and infrastructure, will also entail construction of significant new cycling facilities alongside bus routes on the key radial routes into the city centre and provide safe cycling arrangements, largely segregated from other traffic along those corridors. These substantial investments will allow us to further increase the numbers cycling, thereby easing congestion, improving public health and enhancing the liveability of our cities.

As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport I have responsibility for policy and overall funding in relation to public transport. However, I am not involved in the day-to-day operations of public transport, including the maintenance of existing cycle lanes. As this is the function of the local authorities it is appropriate that this issue is better addressed by my colleague the Minister for the Department of Housing Planning and local Government.

In relation to the expected allocation of funding for 2019 the NTA working with the local authorities will determine the 2019 allocation in the latter part of this year.

Year	Funding (€)
2009	7,001,000
2010	8,383,000
2011	16,366,000
2012	10,943,000
2013	11,580,000
2014	12,483,000
2015	18,891,000
2016	10,488,000
2017	6,985,000

Public Service Obligation Data

532. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the allocation for the PSO in each of the years 2011 to 2017; the allocation for 2018; and the planned allocation for 2019, in tabular form. [23382/18]

533. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the estimated cost of increasing the Exchequer subvention to CIÉ by 5%, 10%, 15% and 20%, respectively. [23383/18]

534. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the breakdown of the PSO in each of the years 2011 to 2017 into each of its CIÉ recipients, Dublin Bus, Iarnród Éireann and Bus Éireann; the allocation for 2018; and the planned allocation for 2019. [23384/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 532 to 534, inclusive, together.

Since 2010 my Department no longer pays subvention for public transport services paid directly to operators.

The award of Public Service Obligation (PSO) funding falls under the independent statutory remit of the National Transport Authority (NTA). The allocations to the companies are decided by the NTA in exercise of its statutory mandate and in accordance with the various contract arrangements that it has in place with PSO service providers. I have therefore referred the Deputy's questions to the NTA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive replies within ten working days.

As the Deputy is aware, in Budget 2018 I secured an 8% increase in the overall Exchequer funding available for Public Service Obligation and I can confirm that €284,967 million is available to the National Transport Authority in 2018.

The Deputy has asked about the planned PSO allocation for 2019. The allocation for PSO public transport services is subject to the annual Budgetary process and therefore the 2019 allocation is yet to be determined in the context of the Estimates process.

Public Transport Subsidies

535. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the estimated cost of both current and capital investment needed to put Iarnród Éireann on an economically sustainable footing. [23385/18]

536. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the estimated cost of both current and capital investment needed to put Bus Éireann on an economically sustainable footing. [23386/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 535 and 536 together.

The Deputy is aware that the taxpayer makes a significant and recurring contribution each year to both Iarnród Éireann and Bus Éireann. This contribution takes the form of both current, Public Service obligation (PSO), funding and also capital funding.

The Public Service Obligation (PSO) funding to transport operators for providing subvented public transport (i.e. bus and rail) services is paid by the National Transport Authority from the current expenditure monies that are made available to the Department's Vote annually as part of the Estimates process. Decisions on the PSO allocations to particular operators are made annually by the NTA having regard to the Authority's statutory role and the PSO contracts that it has in place with each of the individual providers.

I am committed to the public transport system continuing to provide and develop services that are essential for local communities. That commitment is evidenced by the 8% increase secured in Budget 2018 for PSO services across both the bus and rail networks. That means that a total of over €285 million will be allocated in 2018 to support the delivery of these socially necessary but financially unviable services across the public transport companies. Budget 2018 also provided for an increase in the multi-annual capital investment for public transport with a four-year capital envelope of €2.7 billion over the period 2018-2021. This represents a 30% increase over the original Capital Plan allocations for 2018-2021 and includes investment of over €1 billion in heavy rail maintenance and infrastructure.

The Rail Review Report was undertaken jointly by the National Transport Authority (NTA) and Iarnród Éireann and was published in 2016. The purpose of the Review was:

- to look at the existing rail network;
- to identify the funding required both to maintain the network and to provide for necessary capital works;
- and to consider the gap in funding.

Since the Rail Review was published, there have been significant developments in relation to the level of funding available for rail investment and services. The public consultation process held by the NTA following the publication of the Rail Review in 2016 helped to begin an informed discussion about the current and future role of rail transport in Ireland. Over 300 submissions were received in response to that consultation process. The NTA has prepared a report of those submissions, which it recently updated to reflect the increased funding made available in Budget 2018 for both current subvention and, in particular, the Capital Plan 2018 to 2021.

The NTA's updated report on the consultation was received by my Department in February. I intend to bring the updated consultation report to Government shortly and I would expect that the consultation report would then be published thereafter by the NTA.

In relation to Bus Éireann specifically, capital investment of over €44 million has been

provided in the last two years for PSO bus fleet replacement and refurbishment and accessibility projects. In addition, current PSO subvention in 2017 was over €52 million, an increase of 28% on 2016. The Deputy is aware that implementation of last year's Labour Court's Recommendation is now complete and a review is currently underway between the Company and its employees. I believe implementation of that recommendation can provide for a successful and sustainable future for Bus Éireann.

Questions Nos. 537 and 538 answered with Question No. 530.

Road Improvement Schemes

539. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the estimated full year cost of restoring funding for secondary roads improvement schemes to 2008 levels. [23389/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As Minister for Transport, Tourism & Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme. The planning, design and implementation of individual road projects on national primary and national secondary routes is a matter for Transport Infrastructure Ireland under the Roads Acts 1993-2015 in conjunction with the local authorities concerned. Within its capital budget, the assessment and prioritisation of individual projects is a matter in the first instance for TII in accordance with Section 19 of the Roads Act.

Noting the above position, I have referred the Deputy's question to TII for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you don't receive a reply within 10 working days.

Sports Capital Programme

540. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the estimated full year cost of restoring funding to the sports capital programme to 2008 levels. [23390/18]

541. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the estimated full year cost of increasing funding to the sports capital programme by 1%, 2%, 3% and 5%, respectively. [23391/18]

545. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the allocation to the sports capital grant scheme in each of the years 2008 to 2018; and the distributions to sports bodies and associated allocations in 2016, 2017 and 2018. [23395/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin): I propose to take Questions Nos. 540, 541 and 545 together.

Details of all allocations under the Sports Capital Programme (SCP) since 1998 and all payments since 2007 are available on my Department's website <http://www.dttas.ie/sport/english/sports-capital-programme>. There were annual rounds of the SCP from 1998-2008. Subsequent to this there were new rounds of the SCP in 2012, 2014, 2015 and 2017. I hope to make an announcement in relation to a 2018 round of the SCP in the coming weeks.

Due to the nature of the SCP, it can take some grantees a number of years to draw down the grants allocated to them. Accordingly, the amount required in the relevant subhead to cover drawdowns under the programme does not equate to the allocations made in that particular

year. In 2008, €50.25 million was allocated whereas a total of €62.168 million was allocated in respect of applications under the 2017 round of the programme. The amounts allocated under each of the general rounds of the SCP since 2008 are set out in the table below.

Year	Total Funding Allocated
2008	€50,250,000
2009	
2010	
2011	
2012	€31,000,000
2013	
2014	€40,486,132
2015	€41,126,179
2016	
2017* (includes allocations made in early 2018 on foot of the appeals process)	€62,168,056

The SCP sub-head contains €49 million this year and this is sufficient to meet all existing commitments under the programme including the allocations under the 2017 round. The cost of increasing this 2017 sub-head amount by 1%, 2%, 3% and 5% is set out in the table below.

2017 sub-head	1%	2%	3%	5%
€49,010,000	€49,500,100	€49,990,200	€50,480,300	€51,460,500

The Department moved to a new IT system in 2014 which provides a single system for managing all aspect of the SCP. Details of all grants allocated directly to the National Governing Bodies of Sport since 2016 are set out in the table below. Separately, thousands of individual clubs and other units at county and provincial levels which are affiliated to the various National Governing Bodies have received SCP funding over the years and all such grants are available on the website.

Organisation	Amount Allocated
Canoeing Ireland	€39,000
Cricket Ireland	€60,500
Eventing Ireland	€18,000
FENCING IRELAND	€11,000
Irish Amateur Boxing Association	€151,500
Irish Amateur Wrestling Association	€6,500
Irish Clay Pigeon Shooting Association	€28,500
Irish Girl Guides	€2,500
Irish Martial Arts Commission	€25,000
IRISH PONY CLUB	€7,000
Irish Rugby Football Union	€55,500
Irish Table Tennis Association	€25,000
Irish Tenpin Bowling Association	€5,000
Irish Tug of War Association	€2,500
Irish Waterski & Wakeboard Federation Ltd	€17,500
Irish Wheelchair Association-Sport	€10,000
Ladies Gaelic Football Association	€22,000

Organisation	Amount Allocated
Mountaineering Ireland	€7,500
Padel Federation of Ireland	€2,000
Pentathlon Ireland	€8,000
Rowing Ireland	€66,500
Scouting Ireland Ltd.,	€6,500
Special Olympics Ireland	€16,500
Swim Ireland	€56,000
The Association of Irish Riding Clubs Limited	€5,000
The Football Association of Ireland	€130,000
Weightlifting Ireland	€18,000
Weightlifting Ireland	€18,000

Sport Ireland Funding

542. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the allocation to an organisation (details supplied) in each of the years 2016, 2017 and 2018; and the breakdown of the distributions of the funding to sports bodies and each of their associated allocations in each of those years. [23392/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The funding provided by my Department to the organisation mentioned by the Deputy for each of the years 2016 to 2018 is outlined in the table below.

	2016	2017	REV 2018
Current	€49.2m	€51.3m	€51.6m
Capital	€29.2m	€10.5m	€6.7m
Total	€78.4m	€61.8m	€58.3m

In addition to the above, Dormant Accounts Funding was allocated to Sport Ireland for sport measures in each of the three years, as outlined below;

	2016	2017	REV 2018
Current	€3.7m	€3.7m	€4m
Capital	€0.8m	€0.9m	€1m
Total	€4.5m	€4.6m	€5m

Sport Ireland is the statutory body with responsibility for the promotion, development and co-ordination of sport, including responsibility for the allocation of funding to the National Governing Bodies of sport. I have referred the Deputy's question to Sport Ireland for direct reply in relation to the allocation of funding to sporting bodies for 2016, 2017 and 2018. I would ask the Deputy to inform my office if a reply is not received within ten days.

Sport Ireland Funding

543. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the fund-

ing provided to an organisation (details supplied) in each of the years 2008 to 2018. [23393/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Sport Ireland is the statutory body with responsibility for the promotion, development and co-ordination of sport, including responsibility for the allocation of current expenditure funding to the National Governing Bodies of Sport. In addition, Exchequer capital funding of €500,000 was provided through Sport Ireland during the period mentioned, under a Partnership Agreement between Sport Ireland and the organisation, to facilitate works relating to the development of pitches for the relevant sport at the National Sports Campus in Abbotstown.

I have referred the Deputy's question to Sport Ireland for direct reply in relation to the allocation of funding to the organisation mentioned by the Deputy in each of the years 2008 to 2018. I would ask the Deputy to inform my office if a reply is not received within ten days.

In relation to assistance for capital projects, the Sports Capital Programme (SCP) is the primary vehicle for Government support for the development of sports and physical recreation facilities and the purchase of non-personal sports equipment throughout the country. The Department moved to a new IT system in 2014 which provides a single system for managing all aspects of the SCP. No grants were allocated directly to the organisation referred to by the Deputy since this new IT system was introduced. However, thousands of individual clubs and other units at county and provincial levels which are affiliated to the organisation referred to by the Deputy have received SCP funding over the years. Details of all allocations to all clubs and organisations under the SCP since 1998 are published on the Department's website <http://www.dttas.ie/sport/english/sports-capital-programme>.

Sport Ireland Funding

544. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the funding provided to an organisation (details supplied) in each of the years 2008 to 2018. [23394/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Sport Ireland is the statutory body with responsibility for the promotion, development and co-ordination of sport, including responsibility for the allocation of current expenditure funding to the organisation referred to by the Deputy. In addition, Exchequer capital funding of €500,000 was provided through Sport Ireland during the period mentioned, under a Partnership Agreement between Sport Ireland and the organisation, to facilitate works relating to the development of pitches for the relevant sport at the National Sports Campus in Abbotstown.

I have referred the Deputy's question to Sport Ireland for direct reply in relation to the allocation of funding to the organisation mentioned by the Deputy in each of the years 2008 to 2018. I would ask the Deputy to inform my office if a reply is not received within ten days.

In relation to assistance for capital projects, the Sports Capital Programme (SCP) is the primary vehicle for Government support for the development of sports and physical recreation facilities and the purchase of non-personal sports equipment throughout the country. The Department moved to a new IT system in 2014 which provides a single system for managing all aspects of the SCP. Since this new IT system was introduced, grants amounting to €550,000 have been allocated directly to the organisation referred to by the Deputy. Separately, numerous individual clubs and other units at county and provincial levels which are affiliated to the organisation referred to by the Deputy have received SCP funding over the years. Details of all allocations to all clubs and organisations under the SCP since 1998 are published on the Department's website <http://www.dttas.ie/sport/english/sports-capital-programme>.

Question No. 545 answered with Question No. 540.

Rail Network

546. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the estimated cost of updating trains and rail infrastructure to cope with projected capacity increases in each of the years 2018 to 2022. [23396/18]

547. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the estimated cost of upgrading heavy rail to operate on electricity. [23397/18]

549. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the estimated cost of upgrading rail systems to include critical safety control and communications systems such as a system for mobile communications, a national train control centre and automatic train protection. [23399/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 546, 547 and 549 together.

As the Deputy is aware, Budget 2018 provided a four-year enhanced capital envelope for public transport of over €2.7 billion to 2021 including funding of over €400 million for investment in public transport in 2018. This increased funding will allow the roll-out of a number of key programmes to address congestion and emerging capacity constraints and enhance safety on our public transport system across our cities.

In response to the Deputy I am assuming the question relates to the heavy rail network. Over €220 million capital investment in heavy rail infrastructure is allocated between now and 2021. This will deliver: the City Centre Re-signalling Project to improve speeds on mainline rail; a new rail Central Traffic Control Centre; progress on the DART Expansion Programme to include increase rail fleet and further progress on electrification of both the Northern rail line to Balbriggan and the Maynooth line, and currently a contract is underway to introduce 28 rail carriages that are expected to re-enter service in 2019. Additionally, Irish Rail and the National Transport Authority (NTA) are assessing the availability of additional fleet that could be introduced to passenger service on the rail network in Ireland in the short-term, prior to the delivery of new diesel electric trains expected in 2022.

Capital funding also includes investment in maintenance and safety projects including the development of an automatic train protection system and enhanced communications system, to maintain safety and service levels in railway operations of our national railway system. Multi-annual funding of almost €30 million over the next four years will continue the programme of retro-fitting older, existing public transport facilities to improve their accessibility features. This effectively triples the previously planned investment amount.

In addition to capital funding allocations, there are also a number other heavy rail measures being taken in the short-term to deliver additional transport capacity, including a 10 minute DART service that will be provided later this year and the current peak time rail services from the Kildare Rail Line linking with the City Centre through the Phoenix Park Tunnel will be expanded to provide an all-day service.

Cycling Facilities Funding

548. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the esti-

mated cost of implementing the remaining measures in the Greater Dublin Area Cycle Network Plan. [23398/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The National Transport Authority's (NTA) "Transport Strategy for the GDA 2016-2035" includes the Greater Dublin Area Cycle Network Plan, an ambitious plan for the development of a safe and high quality cycling network. As the Deputy may be aware, Budget 2018 announced the allocation of funding over a four year period to progress a number of key projects which are included in the NTA's strategy and the Cycle Network Plan. These commitments were also announced as part of Government's Project Ireland 2040.

Over €110 million in capital funding is directly allocated to develop cycling and walking infrastructure in the Greater Dublin Area, Galway, Limerick, Cork and Waterford over the period 2018-2021. This programme will provide active travel routes to help alleviate congestion by providing viable alternatives and connectivity with existing public transport infrastructure. Allocation of funding and details of individual projects are managed by the National Transport Authority in conjunction with the relevant local authorities.

A further €135 million capital funding is allocated over this same period for investment in Sustainable Urban Transport projects, and these will include projects that will provide either direct or indirect improvements for urban cycling. This programme builds on investment to date to deliver improvements in public and sustainable transport infrastructure in the regional cities and the GDA. It includes traffic management, bus priority and other smarter travel projects, which will allow transport infrastructure to function more effectively and will help relieve traffic congestion. Allocation of funding and details of individual projects are also managed by the National Transport Authority in conjunction with the relevant local authorities.

In addition to these cycling-specific investments, the BusConnects programme, a plan to fundamentally transform Dublin's bus system, is calculated to either build or improve over 200 km of cycle tracks/lanes, alongside bus routes on the key radial routes into the city centre. This means providing safe cycling arrangements, largely segregated from other traffic along those corridors. This initiative is the foundation of the overall cycle network that has been planned for the Greater Dublin Area.

All these substantial investments will allow us to further increase the numbers cycling, thereby easing congestion, improving public health and enhancing the liveability of our cities.

Noting the NTA's responsibility in the matter, I have referred your question to the NTA for a more detailed reply. I would ask the Deputy to advise my private office if she does not receive a reply within ten working days.

Question No. 549 answered with Question No. 546.

Road Tolls

550. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the estimated cost of removing tolls from all tolled roads; and the amount of that cost comprising compensation for the companies operating the tolls. [23400/18]

551. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of years that remain on each contract for tolling; and the name of the company operating each toll. [23401/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 550 and 551 together.

Both of these PQs relate to operational tolling matters.

As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy in relation to roads. The planning, design and implementation of individual road projects on national roads are a matter for Transport Infrastructure Ireland under the Roads Acts 1993-2015 in conjunction with the relevant local authority. For regional and local roads it is a matter for each respective local authority.

More specifically, the statutory powers to levy tolls on national roads as well as regional and local roads, to make toll bye-laws and to enter into toll agreements with private investors are vested in TII (for national roads) and each local authority (for regional and local roads) under Part V of the Roads Act 1993 (as amended by the Planning and Development Act 2000 and the Roads Act 2007).

Noting the above, I am referring both questions to TII for direct reply within ten working days. I would ask the Deputy to inform my private office if she does not receive the information.

Sports Capital Programme

552. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if the revised deed of covenant and deed of charge for the 2015 Sports Capital Programme allocation to a company (details supplied) has now been signed; when this funding will be sanctioned to be drawn down; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23404/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin): Under various rounds of the Sports Capital Programme (SCP) almost €500,000 has been allocated to the organisation referred to by the Deputy. As is the norm for allocations of this scale under the SCP, a Deed of Covenant and a Deed of Charge is required to protect the Minister's investment.

The necessary deeds have been signed and sealed on behalf of the Minister and returned to the Chief State Solicitor's Office (CSSO) for their attention. As the organisation is a Limited Company, I understand the charge must be registered by the organisation's solicitor in the Companies Registration Office before formal approval can be provided to the organisation. The organisation's solicitor is aware of this requirement.

Railway Stations

553. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of the provision of a new train station at Pelletstown, including funding; if delays in the provision of funding could see planning permission for the station expire; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23415/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The National Transport Authority (NTA) is responsible for the development and implementation of public transport infrastructure in the Greater Dublin Area (GDA).

As the Deputy is aware, work commenced last year to complete a detailed design and pre-

pare tender documents for a new train station at Pelletstown which is located between the existing Broombridge and Ashtown railway stations. Planning permission is in place and detailed design and tender preparation for the new station is currently being finalised. The objective is to go to tender for construction later this year and once that process concludes a decision on progress to construction and funding can be made.

In light of the National Transport Authority's statutory responsibility for the planning and development of public transport infrastructure in the Greater Dublin Area, I have forwarded the Deputy's question to the NTA for an update on the matter raised. I would ask the Deputy to advise my private office if she does not receive a response within ten working days.

Rail Services Staff

554. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of train and tram drivers who have been convicted of driving while under the influence of alcohol each year for past five years in tabular form; and the consequences each faced. [23478/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I understand that the Deputy's question relates to convictions under the Railway Safety Act 2005. The position is that no train driver or tram driver has been convicted pursuant to that Act of driving a train or a tram while under the influence of alcohol.

National Driver Licensing Service

555. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when a person (details supplied) in County Donegal can expect to receive a response from the NDLS in relation to a driver query; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23585/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The Road Safety Authority (RSA) has statutory responsibility for the National Driver Licence Service (NDLS), and I have no power to intervene in individual cases. I have therefore referred the Question to the Authority for direct reply. I would ask the Deputy to contact my office if a response has not been received within ten days.

Health and Safety

556. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport further to Parliamentary Question No. 521 of 22 May 2018, if a comprehensive reply will issue on whether the Marine Survey Office will identify in writing the way in which the process of reconducting a health and safety evaluation for operators landing at Inishmurray Island can be commenced in view of the fact that it has been ten years since the last evaluation was conducted and to date no accidents have occurred; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23601/18]

557. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport further to Parliamentary Question No. 521 of 22 May 2018, if a comprehensive reply will issue on whether the question originally asked, which was, if the Marine Survey Office will begin the process of reconducting a health and safety re-evaluation for operators landing at Inishmurray Island in view of the fact that it has been ten years since that last evaluation was conducted and no accidents have occurred to date, can actually be answered; and if he will make a statement

on the matter. [23602/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 556 and 557 together.

I have replied very extensively to a number of PQs and a topical debate on this issue. Minister of State Griffin has also met the Deputy on at least two occasions to discuss the matter and possible remedies.

At the last meeting between Minister of State Griffin and the Deputy on 10 May, I understand the Marine Survey Office explained the process for carrying out an evaluation as suggested - ie that an assessment of landing facilities at a location can be requested by an operator in the context of seeking a passenger boat licence which includes the location on in its plying limits.

It was also made clear that there would be little to be gained from such an evaluation if no changes had been made to the landing facilities in the intervening time. The fact that no accidents have been reported as you suggest in your question does not make the landing facility compliant with safety requirements. The Marine Survey Office is the safety regulator for maritime transport in Ireland and it is not in a position to compromise on required standards in this regard.

As I have stated before, the solution here is simple. The provision of an appropriately safe landing facility. Once an appropriate landing facility is provided, officials of the Marine Survey office will assess it and any passenger vessel proposing to use the facility with a view to granting the appropriate licence.

Sports Facilities Expenditure

558. **Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of the availability of funding for the development of a project (details supplied). [23639/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin): The recently published National Development Plan (NDP) contains a commitment to establish a new “Large Scale Sport Infrastructure Fund” (LSSIF) with at least €100 million available over the coming years. My officials are currently drafting the terms and conditions of the new scheme.

My officials are also engaging with relevant stakeholders on the proposed terms and conditions of the new scheme. It is intended that the Fund will be for larger projects, such as that referenced by the Deputy, where the proposed Government contribution exceeds the amount currently available for individual projects under the Sports Capital Programme. It will be open to the promoters of this project to apply for funding once the new scheme is launched later this year.

There is no funding provided for the programme in 2018. The amounts to be provided in 2019 and 2020 will be decided in the context of the annual estimates for each year respectively.

An announcement in relation to when applications will be accepted will be made once the terms and conditions are finalised.

Motor Insurance Regulation

559. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the progress made regarding the establishment of a motor insurance database; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23713/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Recommendation 28 of the Report on the Cost of Motor Insurance concerns the establishment of a motor insurance database, known as the Motor Third Party Liability (MTPL) insurance database, to identify uninsured driving. Phase 1 relating to privately owned motor vehicles will provide insured and uninsured vehicle lists to An Garda Síochána based on vehicle licence plate number and insurer name. This includes providing a list of uninsured vehicles that can be loaded into the An Garda Síochána Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) System.

Phase 2 of the project, which includes the capturing of driver numbers, has an expected date for its completion of Quarter 3 2020.

I acknowledge the commitment of the insurance industry, including their financial commitment, to deliver the MTPL insurance database project as soon as possible. In tandem with the efforts of the insurance industry, my Department will do everything possible to support the efforts of the industry, including through any road traffic legislative measures necessary to support these efforts, in developing the database. This includes an amendment to the Road Traffic Act 1961 which is being submitted at Report stage of the Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill 2017, which is currently under way.

Bus Services

560. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the timeline for the full implementation of the BusConnects programme; the associated budget; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23714/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As the Deputy is aware, the National Transport Authority's (NTA) Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area provides the overarching framework for the planning and delivery of transport infrastructure and services for Dublin over the next two decades. Addressing urban congestion on both the strategic road network and locally in certain locations is an important theme in the Strategy. The measures proposed are linked to an analysis of current and projected levels of travel demand across the region.

Budget 2018 provides for an increase in the multi-annual capital investment for public transport with a four-year capital envelope of €2.7 billion over the period 2018-2021. This substantial multi-annual envelope includes funding of some €770 million for the BusConnects programme.

The recently published National Development Plan (NDP), which was launched earlier this year by Government as part of Project Ireland 2040 setting out capital allocations over the period to 2027, also confirms BusConnects as one of a number of key investment priorities which will address growing congestion and capacity constraints on the existing public transport network in the short to medium term, and provides for funding of €2.4 billion for the overall BusConnects programme.

Initially rolled-out in Dublin, BusConnects will radically redesign the bus system and will include a network of "next generation" bus corridors on the busiest routes including segregated cycling and walking facilities, a complete redesign of the bus network, a network of park and ride facilities at key locations, simpler fare structures, cashless payment system and a state of

the art ticketing system, new bus branding, integrating bus vehicles of different operators and types, new bus stops and shelters and use of low emission vehicles. The advantage of a bus-based solution is that the implementation can start quickly and the benefits of BusConnects can start coming on stream progressively from 2019.

Work is on-going, by the National Transport Authority (NTA), on the redesign of the bus services network in the Greater Dublin Area (GDA) and also on infrastructure proposals for Core Bus Corridors which will be an integral part of the programme. When this work is complete, the NTA will be launching public consultations. The NTA expect that an initial public consultation at Concept Level on the Core Bus Corridors will be held in Quarter 2 of this year. This period of consultation will be followed by a next phase in Quarter 3 on the re-designed bus network (service re-design) and a separate public consultation on the Core Bus Corridors at a detailed level also in Quarter 3. The results of the public consultations will inform the NTA on the final decisions to be made on the network redesign and Core Bus Corridors routes.

Dublin Bus Fleet

561. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will provide Dublin Bus with more tag on options and-or points other than the single onboard tag on point with a view to decreasing the stop time per stop for buses (details supplied); and his plans to upgrade Dublin Bus stops with a Leap card tag on-off point. [23716/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, I have responsibility for policy and for the overall funding of public transport. The National Transport Authority (NTA) has statutory responsibility for the development and implementation of public transport and sustainable transport infrastructure including the Leap Card Scheme.

The NTA recently marked the sale of the 3 millionth Leap Card. The card is a convenient way for passengers to pay for public transport services in Dublin, Cork, Galway, Limerick, Waterford and Wexford. The NTA reports that, of the 3 million cards issued to date, close to 250,000 have been sold in the first four months of 2018 alone. Since the sale of the first edition over 6 years ago, the Leap Card has enabled 495 million journeys – 63.5 million of which took place from January to April 2018. The card has emerged as the preferred payment for passengers in many Irish cities, with consumers using it to save 20% on their public transport journeys. In the Greater Dublin Area, some 70% of public transport journeys are now paid using Leap. Overall the scheme has reached monthly turnover of €23.3 million per month (April 2018) – or over €633 million since its launch.

The NTA has been gradually extending the applicability of the Leap card system and will continue to do so and to respond positively to customer feedback, so that new innovations are integrated into the scheme. The NTA wishes to ensure that Leap continues to grow as the safe payment method of choice for consumer who are increasingly moving to public transport modes.

Noting the NTA's responsibility in the matter I have referred your question to the NTA for direct reply. I would ask the Deputy to advise my private office if she does not receive a reply within ten working days.

Rail Services Data

29 May 2018

562. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the confirmed arrival and departure times for commuter trains to and from Mullingar rail station, specifically the 17:05 and 19:05 from Connolly to Sligo over weekdays in the past two months; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23719/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The issue raised is a matter for Iarnród Éireann and I have forward the Deputy's question to the company for direct reply. I would ask the Deputy to advise my private office if he does not receive a reply within ten working days.

Early Years Sector

563. **Deputy Denise Mitchell** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the estimated cost per child of introducing a baby box scheme similar to that operating in Scotland. [23659/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): "Baby Boxes" for newborns are to be trialled in a pilot under the national Early Years Strategy that is to be published later this year. Piloting Baby Boxes is just one initiative which will be part of a wide ranging strategy that will address various aspects of the lives of babies and young children under 6 years old and their families including supports to balance working and caring of children, developments in early childhood care and education and health initiatives.

A Baby Box is intended to welcome a new arrival to a family and acknowledge a very significant moment for parents. Key objectives with the Baby Box and linked communications will be to support parents through information on baby development and early learning, advice on breastfeeding and promotion of infant safety. Distribution of a Baby Box is also an early opportunity to link parents in with support services if required. This is consistent with the principle of progressive universalism whereby all families receive something, but where there are additional needs, extra supports are provided.

The concept of Baby Boxes originates in Finland, and has been implemented in a number of other countries including Scotland, and consists of a package of items to assist with the transition to parenthood including safety items, baby clothes and toys and books to support early development. The pilot project will undertake research and consultation with child development experts and with parents to determine items for inclusion in the pack and accompanying information resources. There will be a significant emphasis in the pilot on evaluation of impact and cost-benefit analysis of the measure with a view to determining whether the initiative is suitable for wider roll out.

Until the pilot project and scoping is undertaken it is not possible to estimate the cost of introducing the Baby Box initiative to Ireland as the cost would be heavily dependent on the design of the box itself and what is included in it. Supply of items for inclusion would be subject to procurement rules.

Child Detention Centres

564. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of children in the first quarter of 2018 held in Oberstown Detention Centre who were held in single separation by month; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [23748/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Single separation is when a young person is separated from his or her peers to a room designated for separation, for as short a period of time as is necessary, due to one or both of the following reasons: a) Where a young person is likely to cause significant harm to her/himself or others; b) Where a young person is likely to cause significant damage to property that would compromise security and impact on the safety of others.

My Department receives monthly reports on separation from Oberstown Children Detention Campus. I am advised that the number of single separations for Quarter 1 2018 are as detailed as follows:

Date	Number of Single Separations
January 2018	143
February 2018	142
March 2018	154
	TOTAL 439

Children in Care

565. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of children aged between 0 and 18 years of age who died while under the care of the HSE in each of the years 2015 to 2017 and to date in 2018; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [23183/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I refer the Deputy to my answer to Parliamentary Question No. 526 of 22/05/2018, which requested similar information.

I can advise the Deputy that a child or young person who is the subject of a legal court order or through voluntary parental consent, is placed in foster care or residential care with either state, private or voluntary providers.

Prior to the establishment of Tusla, the Child and Family Agency in 2014, child protection services, including State care, were carried out by the Health Services Executive (HSE).

Between 1 January 2011 and 16 May 2018, a total of 19 children sadly passed away while in the care of Tusla. The following table outlines the total, year by year.

Deaths of children in care, by year

2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018 to date
2	3	2	3	3	1	5	0

Departmental Contracts

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

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I can confirm to the Deputy that my Department has no active contracts with the company named in this question.

The Adoption Authority of Ireland, Oberstown Children's Detention Centre and Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, has also confirmed they have no active contracts with the company. The Office of the Children's Ombudsman has been requested to reply directly to the Deputy on this matter.

Child Protection

567. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she will report on the development of multi-agency specialist child centres to deal with issues of child sex abuse; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [23654/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): My Department is currently working to establish dedicated centres to support children who have suffered sexual abuse in a way that will minimise their trauma, while allowing them to access protective, therapeutic or health services, and to engage with the criminal justice system. My colleagues the Minister for Justice and Equality, Charles Flanagan and Minister for Health, Simon Harris, are in agreement with this approach. An interdepartmental group has been established and met for the first time on 26 February 2018. It continues to meet every 4 weeks and will meet next on the 18th June.

A working title of 'One House' is being used for the Irish model. The 'One House' will bring together the protection, health, immediate therapeutic supports and policing services and put in place child centred services that minimise, as far as possible, any additional trauma for the child and their family.

The group is chaired by my Department and also includes senior representatives from the Department of Health, Department of Justice and Equality, the Health Service Executive, An Garda Síochána and Tusla-Child and Family Agency.

The aim of the group is the preparation for the establishment of a pilot centre early in 2019, through collaboration across the health, criminal justice and child protection sectors. The work of the group will then continue to monitor and support the functioning of the pilot with a view to building on the learning towards the development of a further 3 centres across the country.

Child Protection

568. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if discussions have taken place in terms of synchronising or streamlining the contact between the differing number of Garda and Tusla divisions in relation to dealing with cases of child abuse in view of the recommendation by the Garda Síochána Inspectorate; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [23655/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The Children First Joint Working Protocol for An Garda Síochána/Tusla- Child and Family Agency Liaison was published earlier this year to reflect the provisions in the new Children First Act 2015. The protocol covers respective responsibilities in key areas including:

- Notifications of suspected abuse between both agencies

- Role and function of each Agency
- Confidentiality and information sharing
- On-going case management liaison
- Liaison management structures and meetings

Section 10 of the protocol outlines the structures and arrangements for liaison between An Garda Síochána and Tusla at Local Area office and Garda district levels as well as the national structures that are in place. The protocol is available on Tusla's website at www.tusla.ie.

Child Care Costs

569. **Deputy Denise Mitchell** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs when her Department's independent cost review of the childcare sector which was scheduled to go to tender in September 2017 will be published. [23656/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The Independent Review of the Cost of Providing Quality Childcare is a critical input to the on-going reform of childcare in Ireland and is commitment in the Programme for Government.

This Review seeks to:

- Analyse the current costs of providing childcare in Ireland and factors that impact on those costs;
- Develop a model of the unit cost/costs of providing childcare that allows analysis of policy changes and variation in cost-drivers, including the potential impact of increased professionalisation; and
- Provide an objective, high level market analysis of the childcare sector in Ireland, including analysis of fee levels charged to parents.

The contract to undertake this Review was awarded to Crowe Horwath in September 2017. Since then, a literature review, stakeholder engagement and an online survey has been completed. The closing date for receipt of completed surveys was 13th April. Over 800 completed surveys were received and analysis of these data has commenced.

Once data analysis is completed, the results will feed into the development of a cost model and cost calculator for childcare provision.

A report from this Review is expected in late June 2018. It is intended to publish this report thereafter.

Family Resource Centres

570. **Deputy Denise Mitchell** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the estimated cost of establishing ten new family resource centres; and the estimated full year cost of running these centres. [23657/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The Family Resource Centre Programme is administered by Tusla, the Child and Family Agency. At present

there are 109 Family Resource Centres in operation throughout the country, and 11 additional centres will become operational by the end of 2018.

As the cost of establishing new Family Resource Centres and the estimated full year running costs of such centres, under the Family Resource Centre Programme, are a matter for Tusla, I have requested Tusla to respond directly to the Deputy on this matter.

Child and Family Agency

571. **Deputy Denise Mitchell** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the full year cost of employing an aftercare worker. [23658/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The latest information requested by the Deputy is not readily available. My officials have requested the information from Tusla and I will forward the reply to the Deputy once I have been furnished with it.

Early Childhood Care and Education Funding

572. **Deputy Denise Mitchell** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the estimated cost of increasing the higher and lower capitation grants under the ECCE scheme by €5, €10, €15 and €20 per child, per week in tabular form. [23662/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The ECCE capitation rates are currently as follows:

The following table outlines the additional cost of increasing both ECCE capitation rates by the specified amounts from September 2018:

The Department of Children and Youth Affairs secured a 7% increase in ECCE capitation rates in Budget 2018. This increase will come into effect from September 2018, with rates thereafter totalling €69 for Standard capitation and €80.25 for Higher capitation.

Early Years Sector

573. **Deputy Denise Mitchell** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the estimated cost of reinstating the childminding advisory service. [23663/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): It is estimated that some 20 Childminding Development Officers have exited the early years sector over the last number of years. The estimated cost of reinstating these posts on a like for like basis is in the region of €800,000 per annum. However, this estimate should be treated with a degree of caution owing to significantly changed landscape of the childcare sector since these officers were in place.

An expert working group report on child-minding was presented to Minister Katherine Zappone on 26 March 2018 which makes important recommendations on the childminding sector. The report, Pathway to a Quality Support and Assurance System for Childminding in Ireland, outlines a vision for the development of the childminding sector over the next decade. DCYA is currently considering the recommendations contained in the report and it is anticipated that an action plan containing short, medium, and long-term goals for the sector will be published

within the next year.

In this new environment and given the shifting context of the childcare environment in the last few years, the actual cost of reinstating a form of the childminding advisory officers would be difficult to estimate given that the profile and role of these officers would be significantly different from that of the previous officers.

Child Care Costs

574. **Deputy Denise Mitchell** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the estimated cost under the affordable childcare scheme of increasing the monthly universal subsidy in €20 intervals up to €600 for all eligible parents. [23664/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I assume that the question relates to the new Affordable Childcare Scheme (ACS) that is currently being developed, rather than the universal subsidy that is currently available. The universal element of the ACS will match the existing provision and provide a €0.50 per hour subsidy for children aged 6-36 months, for up to a maximum of 40 hours per week. Only families who use the full 40 hours of childcare or more per week will receive the full €20 per week subsidy; families using part-time childcare will receive a pro rata subsidy.

Based on DCYA projections that were used in the Regulatory Impact Analysis published last December, the expected cost of the universal element of the ACS is approximately €15m per year.

The following table sets out the estimated cost of increasing the universal subsidy rate of €0.50 per hour in increments of €20 per month, i.e. €5 per week or 12.5 cent per hour, starting from a baseline of a maximum universal subsidy of €80 per month or €20 per week. The figures in the table assume the targeted subsidy rates within the Affordable Childcare Scheme would adjust to reflect the changes in the universal subsidy-rates, and the figures therefore indicate the additional cost for the scheme as a whole (both universal and targeted). The figures also follow assumptions used in the published Regulatory Impact Analysis as to the impact of changes in subsidy-rates on the demand for childcare and the number of beneficiaries of the ACS.

The assumptions on which the table is based are subject to change as new data becomes available.

Early Years Sector

575. **Deputy Denise Mitchell** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of inspectors employed by Tusla to inspect all services in the early years sector; and the total pay and non-pay costs of this service. [23666/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Tusla employs 45.28 Whole Time Equivalent (WTE) Early Years Inspectors. The total pay costs for 45.28 WTE Early Years Inspectors for the 4 month period January-April 2018 is €1.04 million. The total non-pay cost for 45.28 WTE Early Years Inspectors for the same period is €57,295.

Early Years Sector

576. **Deputy Denise Mitchell** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the amount of funding allocated to the Learner Fund in 2017 and 2018; the number of practitioners that availed of places; and if all the funding allocated to the fund was availed of. [23667/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The allocation for Learner fund in 2017 and 2018 was €3,000,000 and €2,388,000 respectively. The higher allocation in 2017 is accounted for by the addition of once off funding available in that year. An estimated 1,050 individuals in the sector benefited from Learner in 2017 alone.

The Learner Fund was established to support the Early Years sector in meeting the minimum qualifications requirement introduced by the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016, and subsequently extended to support expansion of the ECCE programme by making provision for those wishing to achieve a Level 6 award.

The Learner Fund has achieved its initial purpose in that the workforce is now predominantly comprised of early years practitioners with the required minimum qualification. The Department now intends to shift its focus to supporting further professionalisation and continuous professional development (CPD), support that is necessary to improve the quality of childcare services and outcomes for children.

Learner funding was not fully utilised in 2017 due to a range of factors including the fact that its initial purpose had been achieved and hence demand reduced, and new arrangements for a CPD system had not been fully designed. In this regard, DCYA is progressing plans for significant investment in a broader continuing professional development model and a fuller announcement on this will be made in the near future.

At this time, it is not anticipated that any underspend will emerge in respect to the Learner Fund allocation in 2018. It might also be noted that DCYA has invested significantly in the upskilling of the workforce in both 2017 and 2018 through funding available under the Access and Inclusion Model.

Child and Family Agency Staff

577. **Deputy Denise Mitchell** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the estimated full year cost of recruiting 100 new professionally qualified social workers. [23668/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The latest information requested by the Deputy is not readily available. My officials have requested the information from Tusla and I will forward the reply to the Deputy once I have been furnished with it.

Child and Family Agency

578. **Deputy Denise Mitchell** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the estimated cost of implementing and supporting the aftercare plans held by persons that are 18 to 21 years of age by allocating 15 hours per week for a support worker in each case. [23669/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I have requested that Tusla provide this estimated cost as soon as possible. I will revert to the Deputy when this is at hand.

Child and Family Agency

579. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the person or body that set the terms of reference in relation to a review (details supplied); the date on which the terms of reference were drawn up; the date on which the review commenced; when the review will be completed; if she is satisfied with the terms of reference and detail therein; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [23685/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): As these matters relate to a review undertaken by the National Review Panel on behalf of Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, I have asked Tusla to respond directly to the Deputy.

Action Plan for Rural Development Funding

580. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the allocation of funding under the outdoor recreation infrastructure scheme over the past 10 years, including 2018; and the expected allocation for 2019. [23381/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme is part of the Government's Action Plan for Rural Development and provides funding for the development of new outdoor recreational infrastructure or the necessary maintenance, enhancement or promotion of existing outdoor recreational infrastructure in Ireland. The scheme was introduced in 2016 as the Rural Recreation Scheme and operated in 2017 under its current title.

Under the 2016 scheme, funding of €7.4 million was provided for 117 projects to facilitate the development of new recreational facilities and the maintenance of existing recreational infrastructure throughout Ireland. This funding was provided to the Local Authorities, Local Development Companies and State Agencies.

Under the 2017 scheme, funding was provided under three separate measures as follows:

Measure 1: Small Scale Maintenance/Promotion and Marketing

Measure 2: Medium Scale Repair/Upgrade and New Trail Development

Measure 3: Large Scale Repair/Upgrade and New Strategy Trail Development

Funding for a total of 219 projects under Measure 1 and Measure 3 was announced on 31st July 2017, to the value of €11.4 million.

Funding for 32 projects under Measure 2 was announced on 8th January 2018, to the value of €2.2 million.

I will shortly be launching a new round of funding for 2018 under the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme and full details will be included in that announcement. The question of funding for the Scheme in 2019 will be addressed as part of the normal Budgetary process.

CLÁR Programme

581. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development if the application for CLÁR funding by a school (details supplied) in County Donegal will be considered; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23112/18]

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 of 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 I can confirm that an application has been received in respect of the school/Club referred to by the Deputy. However, more than 400 applications were received in total by my Department.

My officials are currently assessing all applications received under the 2018 CLÁR programme and I hope to be in a position to announce the successful 2018 CLÁR projects in the coming weeks.

Leader Programmes Funding

582. **Deputy Pat Casey** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the amount paid for rural development Leader projects to the Wicklow LAG by year since 2011, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23140/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The current LEADER Programme covers the period 2014 to 2020 and the funding allocated to County Wicklow for this period is €6,336,549.

No project payments have been made to date in the Wicklow sub-regional area under the 2014-2020 LEADER programme. However, I understand that 17 projects with a value of over €313,000 have been approved for funding by the Wicklow Local Action Group (LAG) which administers the programme in the county, while a further 10 projects requesting over €481,000 in funding are at various stages in the approval process. Funding will be drawn down as these projects are completed and payment claims submitted.

The amount paid for LEADER projects in County Wicklow since 2011 under the previous LEADER 2007–2013 programme is provided Table 1 below.

Table 1: Project Payments to Wicklow LAG from 2011 under LEADER 2007-2013

Departmental Contracts

583. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development 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]

584. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development 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; if contingency plans are in place if the company were to collapse; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21666/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): I propose to take Questions Nos. 583 and 584 together.

My Department holds no contracts with the company in question.

Four state bodies fall under the remit of my Department, Pobal, Irish Water Safety, the Western Development Commission and the Charities Regulatory Authority.

Of these, one, the Charities Regulator, held one contract with the company in question for services in 2017. This contract was established as drawdown from a Department of Justice and Equality Tender agreement.

The Charities Regulator also holds one contract with the company in question for services in 2018. as in the case of 2017, this contract was established as drawdown from a Department of Justice and Equality Tender agreement.

My Department has been assigned overall policy responsibility for the Charities Regulator. However, the authority is fully independent in the performance of its statutory functions, including any decisions in relation to procurement matters.

Accordingly, any contingency planning necessary with regards to contracts held by the Charities Regulator is a matter for that authority.

Town and Village Renewal Scheme

585. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the details of the grant scheme announced previously to help first-time buyers refurbish derelict buildings in rural areas and towns; if this scheme will be implemented nationwide; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23325/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): A pilot scheme to encourage residential occupancy in rural towns and villages is currently being developed as part of the Town and Village Renewal Scheme which is administered by my Department. The pilot will consider ways in which properties that are currently not in use in town centres can be renovated to allow them to be used for residential purposes. This will help to rejuvenate town centres while also contributing to the housing needs of individuals.

I have established a Steering Group to oversee the design and delivery of the pilot scheme, including consideration of the target beneficiaries. The Steering Group is chaired by my Department, and involves a number of other key Departments and agencies, including the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, the Department of Finance, and the County and City Management Association which provides representation from the Local Authority sector.

This is a complex issue, but work in relation to developing the pilot scheme is ongoing and I expect that substantial progress will be made in developing the pilot over the coming months. It is envisaged that the pilot scheme will be implemented in a small number of towns initially with a view, subject to the scheme's success, to a wider roll-out over time. This pilot has the capacity to inform future initiatives for town centre renewal under the new €1 billion Rural Re-

generation and Development Fund which was announced by the Government recently as part of Project Ireland 2040.

Ministerial Transport

586. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the number of ministerial cars or vehicles in operation in each of the past six years; and the costs associated with same. [24036/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The Department of Rural and Community Development was established on 19 July 2017.

As Minister for this Department, I can confirm that I do not have a Ministerial car provided from the Garda fleet.

Invalidity Pension Eligibility

587. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the changes introduced since 2010 to the means test for the qualified adult increase payment under the invalidity pension in chronological order; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [23113/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): An increase for qualified adult (IQA) is payable to recipients of Invalidity Pension in respect of a qualified adult (their spouse, civil partner or cohabitant) who is being wholly or mainly maintained by them, and where the qualified adult's personal means from any source does not exceed a weekly means limit.

IQA is payable at the maximum rate where the means of the qualified adult does not exceed €100 per week. If the means of the qualified adult exceed this limit but are less than or equal to €310.00 per week, a lower (tapered) rate of IQA is payable. IQA is not payable where the qualified adult has means of greater than €310.00 per week.

There have been no changes to the qualifying criteria for receipt of IQA as above, since 2010. The rates payable are subject to budgetary increases where applicable.

Social Welfare Payments Administration

588. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if a matter (details supplied) will be addressed in relation to payments through post offices; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [23120/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): As Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection I welcome the recent agreement between An Post and the Irish Postmasters Union (IPU). I understand that the plan paves the way for a modernisation programme which will facilitate the development and renewal of the post office network.

While responsibility for An Post rests with the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment, the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection is an

important customer of the company. The Department makes approximately 80 million social welfare payments per annum of which nearly 42% are by cash via the post office network.

The post offices are seen as a key piece of financial and social infrastructure particularly in rural areas. Accordingly the Programme for a Partnership Government commits to actively encourage payment at post offices.

The Department has given effect to this commitment by renewing its cash services contract with An Post for another year. The current agreement allows me, as Minister, to extend the term of the contract on an annual basis up to the end of 2019.

The Department is required by law to go to public tender for the provision of cash services from 1 January 2020. The award of public sector contracts with a significant financial value is subject to various EU Directives. Public procurement rules ensure that the taxpayer receives value for money and ensures that all potential suppliers are given the opportunity to put forward the most efficient, effective and competitive solutions for consideration and evaluation.

As far as is possible, the Department remains committed to giving social welfare recipients choice of payment method. Its consistent position has been that it will respect customer choice as appropriate and make payments in line with customer preference where choice is available. Notwithstanding that electronic payment methods are significantly cheaper than payments made through the post office network, the Department advises customers that they have a choice of payment method.

Working Family Payment Payments

589. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when a person (details supplied) in County Donegal can expect to receive a decision in respect of a family income supplement, FIS, payment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [23124/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): An application for Working Family Payment (formerly Family Income Supplement) was received from the person concerned on 8th March 2018.

One of the conditions for receipt of Working Family Payment (WFP) is that an applicant or the applicant and spouse, partner or cohabitant must be engaged in full-time employment as an employee for not less than 38 hours per fortnight or 19 hours per week.

As the person concerned did not satisfy the above condition, the application for WFP was refused on 20th March 2018.

However the applicant provided two more recent payslips and the application was reviewed by a Deciding Officer (DO)

Following a revised decision, the person concerned has been awarded WFP with effect from 22th February 2018 to 20th February 2019.

The first payment will issue to their nominated bank account on Friday, 25th May 2018 and any arrears owing will also issue on this date.

The person concerned was notified on 23rd May 2018 of this decision.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Departmental Expenditure

590. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the estimated saving in each of the years since the inception of sections 13 and 14 of the Social Welfare and Pensions Act 2013. [23132/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): Sections 13 and 14 of the Social Welfare and Pensions Act 2013 introduced the Recovery of Benefits and Assistance scheme which enables my Department to recover the value of certain illness-related social welfare payments from compensation awards made to persons as a consequence of personal injuries claims. The benefits are recovered from the compensator and not from the injured person.

The scheme commenced on 1 August 2014 and the amounts recovered are as follows:

Year	€
2014 (August to December)	€5.03m
2015	€21.60m
2016	€22.75m
2017	€26.41m

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Allowance Applications

591. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an application by a person (details supplied) for a carer's allowance; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [23138/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): An application for carer's allowance (CA) was received from the person concerned on 30 November 2017.

It is a condition for receipt of CA that the person being cared for must require full-time care and attention.

The evidence submitted in support of this application was examined and the deciding officer decided that this evidence did not indicate that this condition was satisfied. The person concerned was notified on 24 April 2018 of this decision, the reason for it and of her right of review and appeal.

The person concerned has requested a review of this decision and submitted additional evidence in support of her application.

The review is currently being processed and once completed, the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

JobPath Programme

592. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Pro-

tection the reason correspondence sent to her office has not yet been responded to; if the issue regarding the behaviour of JobPath with a person (details supplied) will be responded to; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [23143/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I wish to clarify to the Deputy that I replied to the correspondence in question on the 22nd May 2018. As advised the primary goal of the Department's activation services is to move people from unemployment to full-time and sustained employment. All jobseekers are required to engage with the Department's activation service and this obligation applies irrespective of whether the service is provided by the Department's own case officers or those advisers employed by external contractors such as the JobPath providers.

Currently, once a jobseeker is referred to JobPath, they are required to complete the requisite time with the service and will not be referred to a Work Placement programme such as Community Employment (CE) and Tús schemes, as they can only participate with one activation service at a time.

The Department has recently announced changes that will facilitate access, from 1st June this year, to CE and Tús schemes for long-term unemployed jobseekers who are engaging in JobPath. This has a number of benefits both for the vital services provided at a local level by participants on CE and Tús programmes and directly for the Department's customers. It maximises the assistance and services for people who are long-term unemployed through a combination of a quality work placement and personalised job seeking support provided through the JobPath service.

Customers currently engaged with the JobPath service and those who may be referred in future will have the option of applying for CE and Tús placement while continuing to engage with JobPath.

Up to 1st June, where a jobseeker on the date of their referral to JobPath has received written confirmation of an offer of a placement on a CE Scheme, with a start date within 4 weeks of the JobPath referral date, they were facilitated to take up the placement wished.

The person concerned however does not currently meet these criteria. He was referred to the JobPath programme on 17th March this year and received a written offer of a CE placement on 27th March. He was incorrectly advised on 6th April that he was eligible to take up this placement, but as the offer did not pre-date the JobPath referral date he did not meet the eligibility criteria and is therefore required to remain on the JobPath programme.

Nevertheless, with the implementation of these new rules he will become eligible to take up this, or any other, CE placement on or after 1st June this year. Should he wish to avail of this option after 1st June he will benefit from the jobseeking support of JobPath while also availing of part-time work experience and quality training and development opportunities provided by a CE scheme.

Domiciliary Care Allowance Applications

593. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if a domiciliary care allowance will be awarded to a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [23163/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): An application for domiciliary care allowance was received from

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this lady on the 24th May 2017. The application was not allowed as the child was not considered to satisfy the qualifying conditions for the allowance. A letter issued on the 3rd October 2017 advising of the decision.

A review of this decision was requested on the 9th October 2017. The application was re-examined by a deciding officer who determined that a revised decision was not warranted. She was notified of the decision on the 19th February 2018.

An appeal was submitted on the 16th March 2018 and additional information on the child's care needs was supplied. The application will again be re-examined by a deciding officer and a revised decision will be made if warranted, or alternatively the case will be referred for consideration by the Social Welfare Appeals Office.

This latest review is due to be decided shortly and it is anticipated that she will be notified of the outcome of the deciding officer's review within the coming week.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Allowance Applications

594. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if and when a carer's allowance will be approved in the case of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [23178/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Carer's allowance (CA) is a means-tested social assistance payment made to a person who is habitually resident in the State and who is providing full-time care and attention to a person who has such a disability that they require that level of care.

I confirm that my Department received an application for CA from the person concerned on the 20 April 2018.

The application is currently being processed and once completed, the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Telephone Support Allowance

595. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the timeframe for payment of the telephone allowance; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [23184/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The new weekly Telephone Support Allowance (TSA) of €2.50 will be paid from June 2018. People in receipt of the Living Alone Allowance and the Fuel Allowance will automatically qualify for the TSA. It is expected that approximately 124,176 customers will qualify for the scheme and the estimated full year cost is €16.14 million.

The first payment of the TSA is planned to issue in the week beginning the 4th June.

The primary objective of the TSA is to allow the most vulnerable people access to personal alarms or phones for security. The allowance will also encourage social contact and assist in

the prevention of social isolation for those living alone.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Pension Provisions

596. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the consultation process that is to take place with current occupational and future pensioners regarding the EU IORP II directive. [23252/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The over-arching objective of IORP II is to facilitate the development of occupational retirement savings in the EU. Many of the provisions contained within the IORP II directive will also support positive reform of the Irish occupational pension sector. The directive provides for a range of new requirements concerning governance, management standards in schemes, safekeeping of assets, the need for clear and relevant information to members, the removal of obstacles to cross-border provision of pension services and the facilitation of cross border transfer of schemes. There are also provisions that will enhance the powers of the pension regulators for effective supervision of IORP.

My Department held a number of consultation processes prior to the agreement and publication of the new IORP II directive. Discussions between EU Member States and the Commission regarding the proposals in the new directive were extensive and submissions received during these consultations helped to inform this process and ensure the views of all Irish stakeholders were considered and understood.

In 2010 European Commission published its Green Paper towards adequate, sustainable and safe European pension system. The purpose of the Green Paper was to launch a European debate through extensive and early consultation on the key challenges facing pension systems and how the EU can support Member State efforts to deliver adequate and sustainable pensions. As part of this work my Department conducted a consultation process to help in its responses to the green paper.

In 2014 following the publishing of a proposal for an updated IORP Directive a further public consultation was held by my Department and organisations and individuals were invited to submit comments and observations on the Directive. The purpose of this consultation was to obtain views from all stakeholders on the content of the Directive and on the implications (including cost implications). The relevant stakeholders included the groups representing older people, employer and employee representatives, and the pensions industry.

In 2016 the Pensions Authority held a consultation process including a public forum on the reform and simplification of supplementary funded private pensions and this consultation specifically referenced IORP II requirements.

In tandem with the above officials of my Department briefed the relevant Oireachtas Committee on a number of occasions.

Following its publication in the Official Journal of the European Union in December 2016, the directive will have to be transposed into Irish law by 13 January 2019. My Department, along with the Pensions Authority, is currently working on ensuring that the directive will be transposed by this date.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Support Grant

597. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when a person (details supplied) will receive documentation to confirm entitlement to a respite care grant; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [23262/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Carer's Support Grant (CSG) formerly the Respite Care Grant (RCG) is paid automatically on the first Thursday in June to people in receipt of Carer's Allowance, Carer's Benefit, Domiciliary Care Allowance or Prescribed Relative's Allowance. Other people who are not in receipt of a social welfare payment but who are providing full-time care and attention are also eligible and can apply for the grant to a standalone CSG section. Application for the standalone grant is made through completion of a short questionnaire which my Department sends to each carer annually.

I can confirm that the person referred to by the Deputy will receive her 2018 questionnaire shortly.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Free Travel Scheme Data

598. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the solutions available for small bus operators from her Department to record passenger numbers in view of the fact that a manual record system is difficult and time consuming to maintain; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [23283/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The free travel scheme permits free travel on most CIE public transport services, Luas and a range of services offered by some 80 private operators in various parts of the country for those eligible under the scheme. There are currently approximately 911,000 customers in receipt of free travel.

Travel operators must comply with a number of terms and conditions when entering the free travel scheme. In this regard they must conduct surveys of free travel customers to my Department's specification, provide copies of their motor insurance policies indemnifying my Department and providing for public liability, and provide copies of the public service vehicle licences for each of the buses being used on the service.

Surveys of passenger levels are of six month duration. My Department is satisfied that this length of time produces a very fair and equitable result bearing in mind the obligation to ensure that value for money is obtained for the taxpayer. The six month period is necessary to capture possible seasonal fluctuations in passenger traffic. It also ensures that operators in the scheme are fairly compensated for the carriage of free travel pass holders. Currently, ten operators have initiated surveys of their routes to review their rates of payment. To date, these operators have not reported issues with the process.

While my Department appreciates that conducting a survey can be labour intensive, it is not possible to admit new travel operators or to review payment of existing operators in respect of the Free Travel Scheme in the absence of survey data. My Department continually reviews these arrangements to ensure that they are as streamlined as possible. Operators are also being encouraged to install the ITS technology which provides ticketing equipment to operators. This

technology facilitates customers using the Leap Card to pay for their travel and reads the free travel variant of the Public Services Card. This, in turn, minimises some of the work involved in the survey process.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Disability Allowance Applications

599. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an application for a disability allowance by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [23322/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): I can confirm that my Department received an application for disability allowance (DA) from this gentleman on 20 March 2018.

On 24 May 2018 the person concerned was requested to supply supporting documentation required by the deciding officer in order to make a decision on his eligibility. On receipt of this information a decision will be made on his DA application and the person concerned will be notified of the outcome.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Fuel Allowance Eligibility

600. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the reason a person (details supplied) is being refused fuel allowance; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [23323/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): Fuel allowance is a means tested payment, payable to people who either live alone or live only with certain other qualified people.

Based on the information provided to the Department by this gentleman he does not qualify for the allowance as his household consists of people who are not in a qualifying category.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Disability Allowance Eligibility

601. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the reason an application for disability allowance by a person (details supplied) was refused; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [23347/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): The person concerned submitted an application for disability allowance (DA) on 5 February 2018. Their application, based upon all the evidence submitted, was refused on medical grounds as it was not found that this lady was substantially restricted in taking up employment.

The person concerned was notified in writing of this decision on 4 May 2018 and was also

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notified of their right to request a review of this decision or to appeal it to the independent Social Welfare Appeals Office (SWAO). No request for an appeal or review has been received.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

JobPath Data

602. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the level of information shared with Seetec. [23351/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Upon referral the JobPath provider receives data that allows them to commence engagement with the customer. This data includes the customer's name, address, date of birth, PPSN, education and employment history and work skills (e.g. possession of a driving licence) and employment preferences. During the period of the customer's engagement with the JobPath service the contractors will notify my Department of any change of circumstance (e.g. address) which the customer notifies to the contractor and should the customer not be successful in gaining employment the contractor will provide my Department with an exit update upon completion of the 52 week engagement.

JobPath providers are contractually required to register with the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner.

All Contracts in place are governed by and construed in accordance with the laws of Ireland and the courts of Ireland have exclusive jurisdiction over these contracts. My Department's contracts with the JobPath providers are in compliance with all relevant legislation and any information shared is contractually based and necessary to provide a service.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

JobPath Data

603. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the reason it is not sufficient that the employer confirms employment status with her Department only in view of the requirement by Seetec to contact employers to confirm employment status (details supplied). [23352/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): As the Deputy will be aware JobPath is an employment activation service that supports people who are long-term unemployed and those most distant from the labour market to secure and sustain full-time paid employment.

While customers are participating with JobPath they receive intensive individual support to help them address barriers to employment and to assist them in finding jobs. Each person is assigned to a personal advisor who will assess a person's skills, experience, challenges and work goals. Following the assessment, the jobseeker and their personal advisor will agree a personal progression plan, this document will include a schedule of activities, actions and job focused targets. Participants are also provided with a range of training and development supports including online modules, career advice, CV preparation and interview skills. The person may also be referred for further education and training opportunities.

The JobPath Providers are also required to offer in-work support to the person for up to

twelve months while they remain in employment. This includes scheduled contact with the person as well as ad-hoc contact should they need immediate support or advice, this may be particularly important for those in temporary or part-time employment to provide the specific support needed to progress to more sustainable permanent employment.

The person is not under any obligation to provide employment or employer details to the JobPath provider but, if they wish to do so and avail of the in-employment support offered, all information will be treated confidentially.

I trust this clarifies matters for the Deputy.

Maternity Leave

604. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the maternity policy in Intreo offices for jobseekers who are pregnant and after giving birth; if women are required to be available for work or actively seeking employment throughout the duration of pregnancy; the length of time their maternity leave is for giving birth; if this is in line with the six months maternity leave, with another four months unpaid as an option, granted to women that are in employment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [23358/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Department of Justice and Equality has responsibility for maternity leave which is provided for in the 1994 and 2004 Maternity Protection Acts (as amended). The Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection has responsibility for the associated social welfare payment of maternity benefit as provided for in the Social Welfare Consolidation Act 2005 (as amended). The 2018 Revised Estimates for my Department provide for expenditure of approximately €264 million on maternity benefit.

Maternity benefit is a payment made for 26 weeks to women who are on maternity leave from work and covered by social insurance (PRSI). The fundamental qualification criteria for maternity benefit are that a woman must be in insurable employment or self-employment and is contingent on entitlement to statutory maternity leave. The applicant must also satisfy certain PRSI contribution conditions. A further 16 weeks' of additional maternity leave is also available from work, which must begin immediately after the end of the paid maternity leave. This period is not covered by maternity benefit, nor is the employer obliged, unless otherwise agreed, to make any payment during this period.

The jobseeker's benefit (JB) and jobseeker's allowance (JA) schemes provide income support for people who have lost work and who are available for and genuinely seeking full-time employment. In the absence of any complications of pregnancy, a pregnant woman must satisfy these conditions for receipt of payment.

However, on an administrative basis a woman who informs the Department that she is pregnant will not be requested to prove that she is genuinely seeking or available for work in the 4 weeks immediately before the expected date of birth of her child and in the 8 week period following the birth. She will also not be required to attend at the Intreo Centre/Branch Office for signing purposes during this period provided she informs the Intreo Centre/Branch Office of her pregnancy.

The Deputy should also be aware that the supplementary welfare allowance (SWA) scheme is available to provide immediate and flexible assistance for those in need who do not qual-

ify for payment under other State schemes. For instance, new mothers who do not qualify for maternity benefit may be eligible for a payment under the SWA scheme. This scheme is considered the “safety net” within the overall social welfare system for eligible people in the State whose means are insufficient to meet their needs and those of their dependants.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Traveller Education

605. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection her plans for a specific Traveller employment strategy in view of the high levels of unemployment in the Traveller community identified by Census 2016; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [23416/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): During the years of the financial crisis from which Ireland is emerging, those at the margins of our society frequently, and regrettably, suffered disproportionately from the effects of financial adjustments. Now that Ireland’s economy is back on a firmer footing, it is a moral and societal imperative that we work together to address the real needs of the Traveller community.

In June 2017, my colleague, Mr. David Stanton TD., Minister of State for Justice with special responsibility for Equality, Immigration and Integration, launched the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy for the years 2017-2021 inclusive. This Inclusion Strategy is a cross-Departmental initiative to improve the lives of the Traveller and Roma communities in Ireland. The development of the Strategy involved a comprehensive public consultation process, including two rounds of public meetings and engagement with Traveller organisations at national level. Integral to the finalisation of the Inclusion Strategy was the work of the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy Steering Group which has members from relevant Government Departments as well as Traveller and Roma representatives and advocates.

Arising from the consultation process, ten key themes were identified as central to the success of the Inclusion strategy, and two of these relate most directly to employment.

First, the Strategy recognises that “there is a very large disparity between Travellers and non-Travellers in the level of education completed” and that “the labour market disadvantage of Travellers is largely linked to that educational disadvantage.” Accordingly, the Strategy identifies 14 different actions aimed at improving access, participation and outcomes for Travellers and Roma in education in order to achieve outcomes that are equal to those for the majority population.

Employment and the Traveller Economy is also identified as a specific key theme in the strategy and it includes a range of relevant actions. Within this range of actions, my Department has committed to delivering and supporting a range of assistive and targeted measures to increase employment, training and apprenticeship opportunities for Travellers and Roma over the long term by:

- Promoting the availability of existing employment and training services to the Roma and Traveller communities and continuing to ensure promotional and information materials on its schemes are available and accessible via the Department’s website;
- Providing tailored supports for the long-term unemployed and for young people to build their confidence and prepare them for the workplace;

- Developing targeted initiatives to increase Traveller and Roma engagement with employment and training services;
- Providing Anti-racism and cultural awareness training for staff under the new shared Civil Service learning and development curriculum.
- Ensuring that Travellers and Roma, under the age of 25, who register as unemployed claimants of Jobseekers' payments will receive a good quality offer of employment, continued education, apprenticeship or traineeship within a period of four months of registering, in line with commitments under the Youth Guarantee.

The Inclusion Strategy is a living document, with monitoring of its implementation a key and integral part of its potential success. This whole of Government approach is necessary to the achievement of meaningful change and progress for Traveller and Roma communities in Ireland.

One-Parent Family Payment Applications

606. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if the decision to refuse one parent family allowance and child benefit allowance in the case of a person (details supplied) will be reviewed; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [23425/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Person contacted Dundalk Intreo Centre, to make an appointment, to apply for One Parent Family Payment on 4th April 2018. As part of the application process Habitual Residence Conditions must be established. An appointment was arranged for 12th April to facilitate this. Unfortunately, the Person did not keep the appointment. No decision has been made on the claim.

The Person has been contacted and offered a rescheduled appointment for 11.15am on Wednesday 30th May 2018.

I trust that this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Domiciliary Care Allowance Applications

607. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if an application for a domiciliary care allowance will be expedited for a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [23466/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): An application for domiciliary care allowance (DCA) was received from this lady on the 3rd April 2018. Applications received in mid- March 2018 are currently being finalised. The application will be considered by a deciding officer and the decision notified to her as soon as possible.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Disability Allowance Applications

608. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social

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Protection the status of an application for a disability allowance by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [23467/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): Following a successful appeal, this lady has been awarded disability allowance (DA) with effect from 20 December 2017. The first payment will be made by her chosen payment method on 13 June 2018.

Arrears of payment due, will issue as soon as possible once any necessary adjustment is calculated and applied in respect of any overlapping payments or in respect of outstanding overpayments (if applicable).

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Disability Allowance Applications

609. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an application for a disability allowance by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [23468/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): I confirm that my Department received an application for disability allowance (DA) from this lady on 13 April 2018. On completion of the necessary investigations on all aspects of the claim a decision will be made and the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

The processing time for individual disability allowance claims may vary in accordance with their relative complexity in terms of the three main qualifying criteria, the person's circumstances and the information they provide in support of their claim.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Disability Allowance Applications

610. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an application for a disability allowance by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [23469/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): This lady submitted an application for disability allowance (DA) on 22 February 2018. Their application, based upon all the evidence submitted, was refused on medical grounds as it was not found that this lady was substantially restricted in taking up employment.

She was notified in writing of this decision on 21 May 2018 and was also notified of their right to request a review of this decision or to appeal it to the independent Social Welfare Appeals Office (SWAO). No request for an appeal or review has been received.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Disability Allowance Applications

611. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an application for a disability allowance by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [23470/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): The person concerned has been awarded disability allowance with effect from 28 March 2018. The first payment will be made by her chosen payment method on 30 May 2018.

Arrears of payment due will issue as soon as possible once any necessary adjustment is calculated and applied in respect of any overlapping payments (if applicable).

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Disability Allowance Applications

612. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an application for a disability allowance by a person (details supplied) [23471/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): The person concerned has been awarded disability allowance with effect from 14 February 2018. The first payment was made by his chosen payment method on 9 May 2018. Arrears of payment due issued to this gentleman on 21 May 2018.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Disability Allowance Applications

613. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an application for a disability allowance by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [23472/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): Based on the evidence supplied in support of their application for disability allowance (DA), this person's application was disallowed on the grounds that the medical qualifying condition was not satisfied.

On 18 May 2018 the person in question has lodged an appeal with the independent Social Welfare Appeals Office (SWAO). All the relevant papers requested by that Office are being prepared and will be submitted by the Department shortly. The SWAO will be in touch with the person in due course in relation to the progress of the appeal.

Disability Allowance Applications

614. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an application for a disability allowance by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [23473/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): This gentleman's application for disability allowance (DA) was

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disallowed on 3 May 2018 as he was deemed to have means in excess of the statutory limit for his circumstances.

Further information was supplied by the person in question with a request for a review of his entitlement on 9 May 2018.

The person concerned was requested to supply supporting documentation required by the deciding officer in order to make a decision on his eligibility. On receipt of this information a decision will be made on his DA application and the person concerned will be notified of the outcome.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Disability Allowance Applications

615. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an application for a disability allowance by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [23474/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I am advised by the Social Welfare Appeals Office that an Appeals Officer, having fully considered all of the available evidence, has decided to allow the appeal of the person concerned by way of a summary decision. The person concerned has been notified of the Appeals Officer's decision.

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.

Disability Allowance Applications

616. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an application for a disability allowance by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [23475/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): Based on the evidence supplied in support of their application for disability allowance (DA), this person's application was disallowed on the grounds that the medical qualifying condition was not satisfied.

The person concerned appealed this decision and submitted additional medical evidence for consideration to the Social Welfare Appeals Office (SWAO). Following due consideration, the appeal of the person in question was disallowed by an appeals officer (AO). He was notified of this decision in writing by the SWAO on the same date. The decision of an AO is final and conclusive in absence of any fresh facts or evidence.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Jobseeker's Allowance Eligibility

617. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when jobseeker's allowance was extended to the self-employed; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [23588/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The 2018 Revised Estimates for the Department provide for expenditure this year on the jobseekers' allowance (JA) scheme of €1.83 billion.

The JA scheme offers income support for people who have lost work and who are available for and genuinely seeking full-time employment. This scheme is a means tested payment which has always been available to all jobseekers including employees and those in self-employment.

A person may qualify for JA if their business ceases or if they are on low income as a result of a downturn in demand for their services. Where self-employed people satisfy the appropriate means test and any other specific qualifying conditions, they have eligibility in the same way as employees.

In assessing means from self-employment, income from the previous twelve months is used as an indicator of likely future earnings. Given the variety of self-employment situations, the means assessment procedures are applied in a flexible manner to ensure that any circumstances that would be likely to lead to a significant variation, either upward or downward, in the level of a person's income from one year to the next are taken into consideration.

People who were previously self-employed and are now in receipt of jobseeker's allowance have access to the full range of activation measures and supports available to other jobseeker's allowance recipients. This includes referral to group information sessions, one to one interviews and subsequent caseworker support. It also includes access to training, temporary employment, work-experience and recruitment subsidy programmes.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Treatment Benefit Scheme Applications

618. **Deputy Paul Kehoe** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of a treatment optical benefit claim by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [23599/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The current eligibility checking process for treatment benefit allows contracted dentists and opticians to check the eligibility of the customer on-line, via the Department's new on-line portal "WelfarePartners". This facility can approve customers, in over 80% of cases, normally within 20 seconds of the enquiry being submitted. Over 1 million such enquiries have successfully been dealt with since last November, with the result instantly relayed to the submitting optician or dentist.

However, if the customer's insurance record indicates that they have insufficient contributions to qualify, a "pending" status is returned to the optician and the eligibility enquiry falls out to be examined by an officer in case there are additional contributions/credits due to the customer that have not been recorded. These enquiries can take some time to finalise due to the possible need to contact other areas in the Department or other EU member states to confirm contributions due. The volume of enquiries generated since the available treatments were extended last November is over three times the norm and has taken time to process. However, technical changes have recently been introduced to reduce the delays in advising of the outcome

of such enquiries.

In the case of the person concerned, the optician who submitted the enquiry was advised in April 2018 that the customer did not qualify for treatment benefits. Two subsequent enquiries have been submitted by the same optician in the last 2 weeks. However, unfortunately the person concerned still does not qualify for treatment benefit as the PRSI contributions paid in the relevant contribution years are not reckonable for treatment benefits.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Parental Leave Expenditure

619. **Deputy Denise Mitchell** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the estimated cost of increasing maternity, paternity and adoptive benefit by €10, €25 and €50 per week in tabular form; and the cost of extending maternity benefit by 26 weeks. [23660/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The costs of these measures are presented in the table below. It should be noted that these costings are subject to change in the context of emerging trends and associated revision of the estimated numbers of recipients for 2019.

-Measure	Maternity Benefit Cost	Adoptive Benefit Cost	Paternity Benefit Cost	Total Cost
€10 rate increase	€10.7m	€0.01m	€0.62m	€11.33m
€25 rate increase	€26.75m	€0.02m	€1.56m	€28.33m
€50 rate increase	€53.51m	€0.04m	€3.11m	€56.66m
26 week maternity benefit extension	€249.6m	n/a	n/a	€249.6m

Parental Leave Expenditure

620. **Deputy Denise Mitchell** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the estimated full year cost of introducing six weeks of parental benefit at €240 per week, which could be taken by either parent at the end of the 26 weeks of maternity benefit. [23661/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Maternity benefit and paternity benefit are paid by my Department and are based on payment of PRSI contributions while working. The current entitlement to paid maternity leave is 26 weeks and the current entitlement to paid paternity leave is 2 weeks. The 2018 Estimates for my Department provide for expenditure of approximately €264 million on maternity benefit and €16 million on paternity benefit.

The estimated full year cost of introducing parental benefit which could be taken by either parent would depend on the cohort of parents who would avail of it. For example an additional week of maternity benefit would cost approximately €9.6m while an additional week of pa-

ternity benefit would cost €5.2m. If those on maternity benefit were to take the additional six weeks the cost would be approximately €57.6m and for those in receipt of paternity benefit, the cost approximately €31.2m. If both cohorts i.e. mother and fathers shared the leave equally (3 weeks each) the cost would be approximately €44.4m.

These estimates are based on the cost for a full year at the current minimum rate of €240 per week for both maternity and paternity benefit and assume that any increase in duration is implemented from the beginning of the year.

This costing is subject to change in the context of emerging trends and associated revision of the estimated numbers of recipients for 2018. It should also be noted that there are additional costs to the Exchequer as these estimates do not include the costs of salary top-ups for public/civil servants.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Invalidity Pension Applications

621. **Deputy Joe Carey** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an application by a person (details supplied) for an invalidity pension; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [23674/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): Invalidity pension (IP) is a payment for people who are permanently incapable of work because of illness or incapacity and who satisfy the pay related social insurance (PRSI) contribution conditions.

The department received a claim for IP for the lady concerned on the 14 May 2018. The claim will be processed as quickly as possible and she will be notified directly of the outcome.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Allowance Payments

622. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when arrears will issue to a person (details supplied) in relation to a carer's allowance claim in payment since March 2018; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [23686/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Carer's allowance (CA) is a means-tested social assistance payment made to a person who is habitually resident in the State and who is providing full-time care and attention to a person who has such a disability that they require that level of care.

I can confirm that arrears of CA due from 30 November 2017 to 28 March 2018, will issue to the nominated post office of the person concerned on 31 May 2018.

The person concerned was notified of this on 23 May 2018.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Polling Stations

623. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government his plans to cease using primary schools as polling stations and to use community centres and other local facilities instead; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23105/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy John Paul Phelan): Under electoral law, the appointment of polling stations is a matter for the appropriate returning officer, who is required to provide a sufficient number of stations, conveniently distributed for the accommodation of the electors entitled to vote there. The electoral acts also provide that a returning officer may, for the purposes of taking a poll use, free of charge, any school or any room in a school and any premises (other than a dwelling house) owned or occupied by a local authority. Guidance issued to Returning Officers by my Department in advance of electoral events advises that it is open to returning officers to hire a hall or other premises if they consider it to be appropriate.

While electoral law is subject to ongoing review, there are no proposals to alter the existing arrangements.

Irish Water

624. **Deputy Pat Casey** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the reasoning behind the decision to prevent parliamentary scrutiny by means of parliamentary question of Irish Water and its responsibilities in respect of provision to housing; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23141/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The Water Services Acts 2007-2017 set out clearly the arrangements in place for the delivery of water and wastewater services by Irish Water, and for the scrutiny and oversight provisions that apply in respect of these arrangements. Since 1 January 2014, Irish Water has been designated as the national authority for the provision of public water services, a role previously vested in 34 (now 31) local authorities. Irish Water therefore has statutory responsibility for all aspects of public water services planning, delivery and operation at national, regional and local levels. It is independent in the exercise of its statutory functions and in relation to day to day operational matters. I, as Minister, and my Department must respect the statutory powers and functions which the Oireachtas has conferred on Irish Water.

The Water Services Acts place specific responsibilities on me as Minister, including responsibility for matters relevant to water policy, funding and in the making of regulations. The Water Services Acts also put in place a variety of legislative and regulatory controls to ensure governance, oversight and accountability in relation to water services.

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.

In relation to housing provision, the Government's Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness published in July 2016 is designed to accelerate housing supply and gives rise to an associated need for investment in water infrastructure and the provision of water services. The Water Services Policy Statement acknowledges that the objectives of the Government's strategic approach to housing identified in the Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan and in the National Planning Framework will need to be provided for in terms of both treatment and network capacity. It is further acknowledged in the Policy Statement that related initiatives such as the Local Infrastructure Housing Activation Fund (LIHAF) and the Major Urban Housing Delivery (MUHD) sites are to be supported.

Within 3 months of publication of the Water Services 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. This Strategic Funding Plan will be laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas.

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 this context that investment decisions in relation to individual projects will be made, including in respect of water services infrastructure that supports the development of housing.

In order to ensure that Oireachtas members may obtain information on issues arising in relation to Irish Water's activities, arrangements have been made for the establishment, within Irish Water, of a team to deal with any such queries efficiently. The team may be contacted via email to oireachtasmembers@water.ie or by telephone on 1890 578 578.

Housing Assistance Payment Administration

625. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if he will address an anomaly in the housing assistance payment whereby private rented properties may be deemed not to qualify for HAP even if the person otherwise qualifies

for reasons of sustainable communities and-or tenure mix; the basis upon which decisions relating to sustainable communities and-or tenure mix HAP refusals are made; his views on the case of a person (details supplied); the number of such HAP applications refused due to this policy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23324/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Any household assessed as eligible for social housing is immediately eligible for housing support through the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) scheme. Once a household has been deemed eligible for social housing support, it is a matter for the local authority to examine the suite of social housing supports available, including the HAP scheme, to determine the most appropriate form of social housing support for that individual household, in the administrative area of that local authority. Decisions in relation to HAP, including the suitability of HAP accommodation is a matter for the local authority concerned.

One of the key functions of housing authorities is to provide or manage the provision of social housing support in a way that counteracts undue segregation between persons of different social backgrounds and ensures the provision of an appropriate mix of dwelling types and tenure classes. Accordingly, local authorities may refuse to provide HAP in an area where they consider there to be an over concentration of social housing supports in place.

In relation to the Deputy's specific query, while I am not in a position to intervene in individual cases, my Department has been advised by the relevant local authority that the family in question have sourced an alternative property and are approved for HAP support.

Public Transport Initiatives

626. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if the free Leap card scheme, which was introduced under Rebuilding Ireland to remove transport costs for children living in emergency accommodation, has been rolled out to counties Cork, Limerick and Waterford; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23348/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Arising from the Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness, my Department is funding an initiative to provide homeless families residing in hotel accommodation and family hubs in the Dublin Region with access to free public transport for essential school journeys.

The Dublin Region Homeless Executive is overseeing implementation of this initiative and, working in partnership the National Transport Authority, has put arrangements in place for the provision of Leap cards to homeless families under this initiative. Given that Leap cards have an inbuilt value-limit, the cards are being made available to homeless families on an on-going basis throughout the academic year, via Focus Ireland's State-funded Family Homelessness Action Teams.

Outside of this arrangement, the Community Welfare Service of the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection considers, on a case-by-case basis, providing for costs associated with the transport needs of homeless families under the Exceptional Needs Payments scheme. This provision is available to all homeless families outside of the Dublin Region.

The limitations of public transport infrastructure in regions outside of Dublin restrict the possibility of Leap cards being usable for transport between emergency accommodation and schools. In light of this, and the availability of other supports as highlighted above, I have no proposals to extend this initiative outside of the Dublin Region.

Electoral Register

627. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the efforts being made by his Department to counteract voter fraud and protect the integrity of the electoral register; the details of instances made known to his Department involving persons being added to the register who did not ask to be registered or who were not eligible to be added in the past three years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23354/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy John Paul Phelan): As the preparation of the Register of Electors is a matter in law for each local registration authority my Department does not compile information of the kind referred to. It is the duty of each local registration authority to ensure, as far as possible and with the cooperation of the public, the accuracy and comprehensiveness of the Register. The focus of my Department's work in relation to the Register is to support and assist registration authorities in ensuring that an appropriate legislative framework is in place.

Electoral law provides for significant measures in relation to voter identification and the prevention of personation in order to counteract voter fraud and to protect the integrity of the Register. At the polling station the returning officer or the presiding officer may, or if required by a personation agent shall, request any person applying for a ballot paper to produce a specified identification document. If a person fails to produce the identification required they are not permitted to vote. My Department has recommended to returning officers that at least one in four voters should be asked for the required identification.

Electoral law also provides for a range of offences and penalties in this regard. Section 149 of the Electoral Act 1992 (as applied to referendums by section 6 of the Referendum Act 1994) provides that a person who is not registered or who is registered but not entitled to be so registered shall not be entitled to vote. The Act also provides that it is an offence to vote when not entitled to do so.

Social and Affordable Housing Data

628. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of social and affordable houses that have been built in Cork city since January 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23360/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Detailed data in relation to social housing delivery by each local authority, for the years 2015 to 2017, is available on my Department's website at the following link:

www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/attachments/1a2-sh-2015-2017-brkdn-final_2018_v3_0.xlsx.

The Government is committed to ensuring that housing is affordable, particularly for households on low to moderate incomes, in areas where people are facing the greatest affordability challenge. Recognising that people want a choice of affordable purchase and rental, depending on their stage of life and circumstances, we are progressing both through a range of initiatives.

I announced new measures in January specifically targeted at delivering more affordable homes to households generally with maximum income of €50,000 for single applicants and €75,000 for joint applicants. Importantly, these new measures are specifically targeted at delivering more affordable homes from the public land bank in certain urban areas, including Cork

City, where affordability issues are greatest. I will be announcing further details in this regard shortly.

Vacant Properties Data

629. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of voids that have been refurbished in Cork city in 2017; the number outstanding; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23361/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The Voids Programme, introduced in 2014 by my Department, provides additional support to local authorities in preparing vacant units for re-letting. The purpose of the Voids Programme is to ensure that vacant units are actively targeted, with a view to minimising the turnaround and re-let time of these units and return them to use in an energy efficient condition.

During 2017, my Department provided funding to Cork City Council to enable them to bring 81 vacant properties back to productive use. Without substantial refurbishment, these social homes would have been left vacant and in turn would not be part of the active social housing stock. My Department does not hold information on the number of outstanding voids in the Cork City Council area, as this number changes according as the refurbishment of some units is completed and others become vacant; information in this regard may be obtained directly from the City Council.

Turf Cutting

630. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the reason it is taking so long to sign legislation regarding bogs under section 160 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as inserted by section 29 of the Environment (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2011, that has been served to continue harvesting of peat. [23593/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): My Department, in consultation with the Environment Protection Agency, is actively progressing the drafting of European Union Regulations with a view to putting in place as speedily as possible a robust and effective legislative underpinning for a proposed new regulatory system for the large-scale peat extraction sector. Under the new system, the Agency will be required to carry out environmental impact assessment as part of its examination of licence applications for peat extraction on sites in excess of 30 hectares, and such activity will be exempted from the requirement to obtain planning permission.

The Regulations under preparation do not propose any amendment of section 160 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, relating to planning enforcement.

Pyrite Remediation Programme

631. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the spend on the pyrite remediation scheme for each year since its introduction; the number of units remediated in each year; and the estimated future costs for homes approved for the scheme but at which work has not yet taken place. [23637/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government

(Deputy Damien English): The Pyrite Resolution Act 2013 provides the statutory framework for the establishment of the Pyrite Resolution Board and for the making of a pyrite remediation scheme to be implemented by the Board with support from the Housing Agency.

The provisions of the Act apply only to dwellings affected by significant damage attributable to pyritic heave consequent on the presence of reactive pyrite in the subfloor hardcore material and not to damage arising in any other circumstance, e.g. such as pyrite in concrete blocks.

The pyrite remediation scheme is a scheme of “last resort” for affected homeowners who have no other practical option to obtain redress and is limited in its application and scope. The full conditions for eligibility under the scheme are set out in the scheme which is available on the Board’s website, www.pyriteboard.ie.

The scheme is applicable to dwellings, which are subject to significant damage attributable to pyritic heave established, in accordance with I.S. 398-1:2017 - Reactive pyrite in sub-floor hardcore material – Part 1: Testing and categorisation protocol. In this regard, it is a condition of eligibility under the scheme that an application to the Board must be accompanied by a Building Condition Assessment with a Damage Condition Rating of 2. Dwellings which do not have a Damage Condition Rating of 2 are not eligible to apply under the scheme. This ensures that, having regard to the available resources, the focus of the scheme is on dwellings which are most severely damaged by pyritic heave. I have no proposals to amend this eligibility criterion.

Some €2.2 million was provided to the Housing Agency in 2014 to meet expenditure incurred under the scheme in respect of design work, contractors, expenses to homeowners, operational costs, and the administrative costs to the Housing Agency. The remediation of 5 dwellings was completed in the final quarter of that year.

An additional sum of €10 million was made available in Budget 2015 to fund the operation of the scheme in 2015, when a further 148 dwellings had remedial works completed under the scheme.

€26.6 million was provided for the scheme in 2016 and some 400 dwellings were remediated under the scheme that year. Last year, some €25 million was provided, facilitating the remediation of some 400 additional dwellings, giving an aggregate total of 945 dwellings completed from when the scheme was first introduced up to the end of 2017.

A sum of €30 million was announced under Budget 2018 to fund the operation of the pyrite remediation scheme this year, of which €9.25 million has already been drawn down by the Housing Agency. This allocation will facilitate the remediation of some 430 additional dwellings and is a clear signal of the continuing importance attached by Government to addressing the issue of significant pyritic damage in private dwellings.

The latest figures available indicate that a total of 2,058 applications have been received under the pyrite remediation scheme. Of these, 1,622 dwellings have been included in the scheme and the applicants notified accordingly. A further 94 applications have been validated and referred to the Housing Agency for the Assessment and Verification Process, while another 212 applications are at the initial Application and Validation stage. 130 applications under the scheme were not successful.

Of the 1,622 dwellings that have been included in the pyrite remediation scheme:

- 235 are at remedial works planning stage,
- 111 are at tender / tender analysis,

- 51 are at tender decision,
- 167 are under remediation, and
- 1,058 are complete.

Applications under the scheme continue to be received at a rate of approximately 10 per week; this rate is likely to be maintained over the course of 2018. It is likely that by the end of 2018, approximately 2,400 applications may have been received under the scheme and in the region of 1,400 dwellings will have remedial works completed; this would suggest that approximately 1,000 dwellings may still be in need of remedial works. It is unlikely that applications will cease entirely post end-2018 but will begin to reduce at a gradual rate over time.

The average all in cost of remediation in 2016 was in the region of €70,000 per dwelling. There can, however, be significant variation in costs, with one-off houses generally having larger ground floor areas being the most expensive.

Ultimately, the Pyrite Remediation Board, together with the Housing Agency, will arrange for all eligible dwellings to be remediated to a high standard and at no additional cost to the affected homeowners. Remediation works will continue to be carried out at the earliest possible opportunity having regard to the existing demands of the scheme and the optimum use of available resources.

NAMA Social Housing Provision

632. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of housing units brought into social housing use via NAMA by year and local authority; the number by local authority purchase, approved housing body purchase and narrow lease; the annual cost each year to secure these units for social housing use; the estimated future annual costs arising from these units that are part of ongoing leasing arrangements; and the length of time these leases are expected to continue. [23638/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): To end Quarter 1 2018, the National Asset Management Agency (NAMA) had identified 6,984 units, associated with the security for loans that NAMA has acquired, that could be made available for social housing. Many of these units were in unfinished housing developments or developments that required significant remediation work. All of the units identified by NAMA, regardless of their condition, location or circumstance were offered to local authorities in the first instance.

To date, demand has been confirmed by local authorities for 2,717 of the properties that NAMA has identified as potentially available. Local authorities have confirmed that 2,424 of the properties are considered unsuitable by reference to sustainable planning and housing policy, or are located in areas with no social housing demand. A further 1,843 properties have been sold or privately let by the owners or receivers since the initial offer was made to the local authority.

These and other statistics are available on the website of the Housing Agency at www.housingagency.ie/NAMA.

The figures are available on a cumulative basis and a breakdown per annum is not available. However, previous status reports, which are published on a quarterly basis, are available on the website of the Housing Agency at www.housingagency.ie/our-services/housing-supply-services/nama/previous-status-reports.aspx.

There is no specific funding stream in my Department for properties purchased or leased through the NAMA process but it is integrated as part of the normal funding programmes. Where the dwelling is purchased by an AHB or local authority, it is delivered as a subset of the capital programmes depending on the delivery model - i.e. local authority acquisition under the Social Housing Investment Programme (SHIP) or AHB acquisitions under the Capital Advance Leasing Facility (CALF). Where a property is leased, this is funded under the Social Housing Current Expenditure Programme (SHCEP).

Information in relation to the number of local authority and AHB purchases and the number of leases is available on the NAMA website (updated to end-December 2017), at the following link:

www.nama.ie/social-initiatives/social-housing/

Where a dwelling is purchased or leased by an AHB, it is made available to local authorities for social housing use under long-term lease arrangements known as Payment and Availability Agreements (P&As). In addition, NAMA has established a special purpose vehicle (National Asset Residential Property Services Limited 'NARPS'), to take ownership of properties where there is an established demand and then lease them long-term to an Approved Housing Body (AHB) or local authority. All NARPS leases are 20 years and 9 months in duration and rents are adjusted in years 7, 10, 13 and 16 in accordance with changes in the CPI Rental sub-indices.

The on-going costs of both P&A Agreements and NARPS agreements are funded by my Department under the SHCEP.

Information in relation to the annual costs of NARPS dwellings and P&A agreements in respect of NAMA dwellings is set out in the table below. This data is based on operational units at end Q1 2018.

Local Authority/AHB NARPS Dwellings	
No. of units	1174
Annual cost	€11,709,992
Length of leases	20 years 9 months
AHB NAMA Purchased Dwellings - CALF	
No. of units	292
Annual cost	€3,016,976
Average length of P&A	28 years

In addition to NARPS type leases, a small number of direct leases were entered into between property owners and AHBs/local authorities via NAMA and are operational under the SHCEP programme. Details of the number of these leases, broken down by AHB and local authority, are available on the NAMA website.

Regeneration Projects

633. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government his plans for the establishment of a new national regeneration and development agency as provided for in the National Development Plan 2018-2027; when the new agency will be operational; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23703/18]

634. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government when the new urban regeneration and development fund will be open for applications;

when the first funding allocations will be made; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23704/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Damien English): I propose to take Questions Nos. 633 and 634 together.

Project Ireland 2040 signals a significant policy shift towards securing more compact and sustainable urban and rural development, which requires significantly more effective land management in key development areas. Against that background, it is proposed to establish a National Regeneration and Development Agency to assist in ensuring a more effective approach to strategic land management, particularly in terms of publicly owned land.

The Agency will act as a national centre of expertise, working with and supporting local authorities, public bodies and other interests, to harness public lands as catalysts to stimulate regeneration and wider investment and to achieve compact, sustainable growth, with a particular emphasis on complex regeneration projects. The Government is currently working on finalising arrangements for the establishment of the Agency.

Project Ireland 2040 also provides for the establishment of €3 billion in urban and rural focused regeneration and development funding: €2 billion for urban regeneration and development purposes, focusing on cities and towns in excess of 10,000 in population, complemented by a €1 billion fund for rural regeneration of smaller towns and villages, which is the responsibility of my colleague, the Minister for Rural and Community Development.

The Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF) will be a competitive, bid-based programme, that will operate on a multi-annual basis over the period to 2027.

An outline of the approach that the Government intends to take in relation to the URDF along with other complementary NDP funds will be published shortly. URDF bids for funding will be invited focused on an initial three-year period to 2021, with the scope for further bids in 2019 and subsequently over the life of the NDP.

Social and Affordable Housing

635. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the status of his Department's policy on direct housing acquisition from the private sector for social housing proposes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23753/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Over the period 2016-2021, under Rebuilding Ireland, 50,000 additional social homes are to be delivered through build, acquisition and leasing schemes. Through the supports made available from my Department, funding is available to all local authorities to deliver additional social housing stock through a range of initiatives, including, where appropriate, the acquisition of new and previously owned houses/apartments from the private market.

As housing authorities, it is a matter in the first instance for each local authority to determine the suitability of any units for acquisition. Indeed, responsibility for identifying and undertaking such social housing acquisitions is largely delegated to local authorities, so that they may respond flexibly to all opportunities to provide new social housing in their functional areas. Funding is provided on the basis that the houses are suitable for social housing use and are suitable also in terms of a range of other considerations, including sensitivity to local markets and value for money. Details on the number of social houses purchased by all local authorities are available on my Department's website at the following link:

www.housing.gov.ie/housing/social-housing/social-and-affordble/overall-social-housing-provision .

In addition to direct acquisitions by local authorities, Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs) may acquire properties for social housing under the Capital Assistance Scheme and the Capital Advance Leasing Facility.

Harnessing the capacity of existing vacant properties for social housing is a high priority for the Government. The establishment of the €70m Housing Agency fund for the acquisition of vacant properties from banks and investors for social housing use is an innovative new delivery stream and, through providing the Housing Agency with direct access to capital funding, the acquisition process for portfolio properties has been streamlined. The Housing Agency have made significant advances in terms of acquisitions to date and have been liaising with local authorities and AHBs nationwide. To date, the purchase of 383 properties has been completed.

A key priority under Rebuilding Ireland is to increase the level of newly built social housing on a year by year basis. In 2016 and 2017, delivery programmes focussed on harnessing the best options available to secure early and increased delivery. This included acquisitions of vacant stock nationally, completions of unfinished estates, advancing straightforward build projects that could proceed quickly and ensuring that maximum use was secured from existing local authority housing, while in parallel the new-build pipeline was expanded significantly to underpin the much increased delivery projected for the years 2018 to 2021.

In 2018, we will see the results of enhanced building capacity across Local Authorities and Approved Housing Bodies, which will further enhance our scope to meet individuals' and families' needs across the country through additional stock. The total target for all the building programmes in 2018 is 4,969 units, which is more than 50% higher than the corresponding 2017 target.

Turf Cutting

636. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the amount spent on the rental accommodation scheme in each of the years 2011 to 2017 and to date in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23754/18]

637. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of recipients of the rental accommodation scheme in each of the years 2011 to 2017 and to date in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23755/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I propose to take Questions Nos. 636 and 637 together.

At the end of 2016 local authorities reported that there were 20,306 Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS) tenancies in place, with total expenditure in 2016 for the scheme of just under €131 million. My Department is currently collating 2017 RAS data, which includes the number of tenancies in place at the end of 2017, received from local authorities. Expenditure on the scheme in 2017 was just under €143m. Exchequer funding of €134m has been allocated to RAS in 2018, which is expected to be expended in full. Data for the years 2011 to 2016 on the number and cost of tenancies funded under the RAS scheme, broken down by local authority, are available on my Department's website at the following link:

www.housing.gov.ie/housing/social-housing/social-and-affordble/overall-social-housing-provision.

RAS continues to be an effective and secure form of social housing support. As the House Assistance Payment (HAP) scheme is rolled out nationally and replaces rent supplement completely, the number of households transferring to RAS will decrease. In order to reflect the expected decrease in households being housed through the RAS scheme in the coming 3 years, a national target of 600 new RAS transfers has been set for each of the next 3 years 2018-2020, totalling 1,800 new transfers. This is a reduction on the previous national RAS target of 2,000 for the period 2016/2017, which was achieved by Local Authorities. A combined total of 17,600 tenancies are targeted to be supported under HAP and RAS in 2018.

Social and Affordable Housing Expenditure

638. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the amount spent on the Social Housing Current Expenditure Programme in each of the years 2011 to 2017 and to date in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23756/18]

639. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of units on the Social Housing Current Expenditure Programme in each of the years 2011 to 2017 and to date in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23757/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I propose to take Questions Nos. 638 and 639 together.

The Social Housing Current Expenditure Programme (SHCEP) supports the delivery of social housing by providing financial support to local authorities and Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs) for the leasing of houses and apartments. These properties are either privately owned or owned by AHBs. Properties made available under the programme are used to accommodate households from local authority waiting lists.

Details of the total number of properties operational under SHCEP at the end of each of the years 2011 to 2017 are provided below in tabular form. My Department is currently gathering data from local authorities for Quarter 1 of 2018 and this will be published on my Department's website as soon as it is available

Year	Dwellings operational under SHCEP
2011	2,496
2012	3,701
2013	4,600
2014	5,622
2015	7,099
2016	8,366
2017	10,152

In total, it is estimated that an additional 21,100 dwellings will be incrementally supported under SHCEP in the period from 2018 to 2021. This includes dwellings to be sourced through long-term lease arrangements from a range of different sources, the Repair and Leasing Scheme and properties which will be delivered by AHBs through a combination of the support under my Department's Capital Advance Loan Facility (CALF) and private borrowings, including from the Housing Finance Agency (HFA).

The annual cost of SHCEP to the Exchequer is made up of the continuing cost of supporting

existing tenancies and contracts in place at the end of the previous year together with the additional cost of the new tenancies and contracts supported over the course of the year to which the allocation relates. Exchequer funding for SHCEP in 2018 is €115m – an increase of €31m over 2017. Details of the funding drawn-down by local authorities under SHCEP from 2011 to 2017, and for the first quarter of 2018, are provided below in tabular form.

Period	SHCEP Expenditure
2011	€13,817,464
2012	€20,814,526
2013	€27,362,6145
2014	€34,844,780
2015	€42,275,724*
2016	€54,028,752
2017	€84,050,743
Q1 2018	€14,016,737

*Of this figure, a total of €7,933,651 was self-funded by local authorities using funding from their RAS Reserve.

Housing Adaptation Grant Eligibility

640. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government his plans to make changes to the housing aid for older persons and the housing adaptation grant scheme operated by local authorities to accommodate persons (details supplied); and if assistance and information will be provided to persons in these cases. [23802/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The Housing Aid for Older People Scheme provides grants of up to €8,000 to assist older people living in poor housing conditions to have necessary repairs or improvement works carried out. The grant eligible works include the provision of heating and any repair or improvement works which are considered reasonably necessary.

The Housing Adaptation Grant for People with a Disability provides support where heating needs to be extended to cover adaptations or extensions to homes that have been made under the scheme to improve the living conditions of the applicant.

The detailed administration of these grants, including the assessment, approval and prioritisation of grants to applicants under the various measures, is the responsibility of the local authorities. In this regard local authorities prioritise applications on the basis of the medical needs of the applicant and on the urgency and necessity of the identified works.

Ministerial Transport

641. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of ministerial cars or vehicles in operation in each of the past six years; and the costs associated with same. [24033/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The Government decided on 15 March 2011 that, with the exception of the Taoiseach, Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality who continued to retain their State cars and Garda drivers, the travel arrangements then in place for Ministers of State would apply to all Ministers. The

new travel regime for Ministers took effect from 1 May 2011. Since then no ministerial cars have been provided to Ministers in my Department from the Garda fleet.

Heritage Council Funding

642. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the allocation to the Heritage Council in capital and current spending in each of the years 2008 to 2018, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [23114/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): In 2018, I allocated funding of €6.377M to the Heritage Council as part of the annual Estimates process. This represents an increase of €123,000 on the 2017 allocation, which, in turn, had been increased by over €1 million on the 2016 allocation.

The funding allocations to the Heritage Council, both capital and current, as part of the annual Estimates process for each of the years 2008 to 2018 are set out in the table below.

These figures exclude any additional allocations provided under the Environment Fund which is separate to my Department's core allocations and administered within the Vote of the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment.

Heritage Council		
2008 Capital	2008 Current	Total
€7,874,000	€5,529,000	€13,403,000
2009 Capital	2009 Current	
€5,000,000	€5,142,000	€10,142,000
2010 Capital	2010 Current	
€4,500,000	€3,982,000	€8,482,000
2011 Capital	2011 Current	
€3,000,000	€2,992,000	€5,992,000
2012 Capital	2012 Current	
€1,969,000	€2,842,000	€4,811,000
2013 Capital	2013 Current	
€1,781,000	€2,665,000	€4,446,000
2014 Capital	2014 Current	
€1,688,000	€2,805,000	€4,493,000
2015 Capital	2015 Current	
€1,688,000	€3,055,000	€4,743,000
2016 Capital	2016 Current	
€1,688,000	€3,555,000	€5,243,000

Heritage Council		
2008 Capital	2008 Current	Total
2017 Capital	2017 Current	
€2,688,000	€3,566,000	€6,254,000
2018 Capital	2018 Current	
€2,688,000	€3,689,000	€6,377,000

Museum Projects

643. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the allocation to the Irish Museum of Modern Art in capital and current spending in each of the years 2016 to 2018, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [23115/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): The allocation to the Irish Museum of Modern Art for both capital and current spending for years 2016, 2017 and 2018 is as set out below:

Year	Current	Capital	Total - Grant
2016	€ 4,493,000	€320,000	€4,813,000
2017	€ 4,823,000	€320,000	€5,143,000
2018	€ 5,328,000	€320,000	€5,648,000

The Irish Museum of Modern Art also received additional state funding in 2016 and 2017 for specific projects or initiatives as set out below:

Year	Current	Capital	Total – Other funding
2016	€69,645	€90,000	€159,645
2017		€146,577	€146,577

I welcome the contribution of the Irish Museum of Modern Art as the home of contemporary art in Ireland.

Chester Beatty Library

644. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the allocation to the Chester Beatty Library in capital and current spending in each of the years 2016 to 2018, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [23116/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): The allocation to the Chester Beatty library for both capital and current spending for each of the years 2016, 2017 and 2018 is as set out below:

Year	Current	Capital	Total - Grant
2016	€2,229,000.00	€175,000.00	€2,404,000
2017	€2,346,000.00	€175,000.00	€2,521,000
2018	€2,520,000.00	€175,000.00	€2,695,000

The Chester Beatty Library also received State additional funding in 2016 and 2017 for specific projects or initiatives which is as set out below:

Year	Current	Capital	Total – Other funding
2016	€9,500	-	€9,500
2017	-	€80,000	€80,000

The Chester Beatty Library continues to play a valuable role as a window on the artistic treasures of the great cultures and religions of the world.

National Concert Hall

645. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the allocation to the National Concert Hall in capital and current spending in each of the years 2016 to 2018, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [23117/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): The allocation to the National Concert Hall for both capital and current spending for 2016, 2017 and 2018 is as set out below:

Year	Current	Capital	Total - Grant
2016	€2,265,000	€160,000	€2,425,000
2017	€2,449,000	€260,000	€2,709,000
2018	€2,569,000	€260,000	€2,829,000

The National Concert Hall also received additional state funding in 2016 and 2017 for specific projects or initiatives which is as set out below:

Year	Current	Capital	Total – Other funding
2016	€354,000	€250,807	€604,807
2017	€5,000	€195,285	€200,285

I welcome the contribution made by the National Concert Hall to the celebration and appreciation of music in Ireland.

Arts Funding

646. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the allocation to the Crawford Art Gallery in capital and current spending in each of the years 2016 to 2018, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [23118/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): The allocation to the Crawford Art Gallery for both capital and current funding in each of the years 2016, 2017 and for 2018 is as set out below:

Year	Current	Capital	Total - Grant
2016	€1,072,000	€162,000	€1,234,000
2017	€1,176,000	€162,000	€1,338,000
2018	€1,236,000	€162,000	€1,398,000

The Crawford Art Gallery was also in receipt of other state funding in 2016 and 2017 for specific initiatives or projects which is as set out below:

	Current	Capital	Total – Other fund- ing
2016	€45,989.07	€90,000	€135,989.07
2017	€32,132.68	Nil	€32,132.68

I welcome the contribution which the Crawford Art Gallery makes to the visual arts particularly as the only National Cultural Institution located entirely outside Dublin.

Heritage Schemes

647. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the reason the heritage in school scheme has closed for further bookings; the steps being taken to resolve the matter; the reason an insufficient level of funding has been awarded to ensure the scheme can operate; the number of applications received, granted and refused respectively, for the scheme in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [23165/18]

653. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the reason the heritage in schools scheme run by the Heritage Council has been closed for bookings; the way in which this will affect schools; when the scheme will reopen; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [23626/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 647 and 653 together.

The Heritage Council, which is funded by my Department, is independent in the performance of its functions. It is a matter for the Heritage Council to decide how its funding is allocated across the range of research, education and conservation programmes it supports.

In 2018, I allocated funding of €6.377M to the Heritage Council as part of the annual Estimates process. This represents an increase of €123,000 on the 2017 allocation, which, in turn, had been increased by over €1 million on the 2016 allocation.

The Heritage in Schools Programme is very popular and successful in raising awareness and appreciation of our national heritage.

The numbers of applications for Heritage in Schools 2018 are as follows:

Applications Received	Applications Granted	Applications refused
1601	1530	71

I am informed by the Heritage Council that the Programme is fully booked for this year. I understand, however, that the Council is examining whether it can identify further funding to allow the Programme to expand and meet increased demand. I also understand that the Heritage Council plans to develop the Programme further as part of their new Strategic Plan which will be published shortly.

More detailed information on this Programme and the Heritage Council's other activities is available on its website www.heritagecouncil.ie or by contacting the Council directly.

Departmental Funding

648. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if a company (details supplied) has received funding in the past five years; if so, the amount

provided; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [23239/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): My Department has not provided funding to the organisation referenced by the Deputy during the period in question.

Arts Council Grants

649. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the amount of Arts Council grant funding awarded to a company (details supplied) in the past five years; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [23245/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): The Arts Council is statutorily independent under the Arts Act 2003 and as Minister I have no function in relation to the Council's funding decisions. However, following an enquiry on the matter the Arts Council has informed my Department that it has not provided funding for the company referred to in the question.

The Deputy may wish to know that the Arts Council's website provides information of all funding decisions made by the Arts Council from 2008 to date. Funding decisions are also routinely published in the Arts Council newsletter and in the Arts Council's annual reports which are also available in the publications section of the Arts Council's website.

Departmental Funding

650. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the amount of funding provided to a company (details supplied) since its establishment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [23273/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): The total payments made to the company referred to in the question since the date of the establishment of my Department on 2 June 2011 is €39,057 broken between €32,680 in current funding and €6,377 in capital funding.

Departmental Contracts

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

652. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht her views on the number of contracts her Department and State agencies under her aegis hold with a company (details supplied) in view of its recent announcement regarding the need to raise an emergency €700 million; if contingency plans are in place if the company were to collapse; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [21666/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): I pro-

pose to take Questions Nos. 651 and 652 together.

I refer the Deputy to the reply given to Parliamentary Question No. 592 of 7th November 2017.

Two bodies under the aegis of my Department, Waterways Ireland and the National Gallery of Ireland, currently have contracts with the company specified by the Deputy.

Waterways Ireland has a contract for €103,000 (excl. VAT) for software maintenance support and managed services in respect of its Financial Management System. The current contract, which has been extended, is due to conclude on 30 November 2019.

The National Gallery of Ireland has a five year contract valued at €145,000 (excl. VAT) to support the body's financial management system. The contract which was awarded following an open competition is due to conclude in 2021.

Both bodies have advised of their intention to consider alternative financial management systems before the expiry of the existing contracts.

Question No. 653 answered with Question No. 647.

Arts Funding

654. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the budget spent on the provision of music tuition for children in each of the past 10 years. [23635/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): Music tuition includes a very broad spectrum of practitioners ranging from those employed at all levels in our schools, in university and college courses as well as private sector provision.

While my Department is not directly involved in tuition per se, my Department does support the wider sector through a number of initiatives for example:

- One of the commitments in the Creative Ireland Programme is that by 2022 every child will have access to tuition in Music, Drama, Art and Coding. Creative Youth which was launched in December 2017 is a plan to enable the creative potential of every child and young person. The plan sets out measures to deliver on this key goal of the Creative Ireland Programme. This Plan will be progressed over the next five years in partnership with the Department of Education and Skills, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and the Arts Council. At this plan's core is a firm belief that creativity and culture should be at the heart of education for all our young people and I look forward to working with the Department's key partners to deliver this plan for all our children and young people. This report can be accessed at the following link <https://creative.ireland.ie/en/library>.

- Annual funding of €1.6m is provided to Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann (CCÉ) in 2018 for its work in the protection and promotion of Irish traditional music and culture. CCÉ provides weekly classes at community level in all traditional instruments, singing, and dance through its network of centres and branches all over the country.

- My Department provides funding for the purchase of equipment under the Music Capital Scheme to performing groups and individual talented musicians. Support of €224,000 was recently under Scheme for 2017/18. The Scheme is managed by Music Network on behalf of my Department.

- Culture Ireland, provides supports for Irish artists and musicians to travel abroad and develop their careers.

The Arts Council also has a number of schemes and initiatives around the support of music and details of these can be accessed on its website at the following link www.artscouncil.ie/available-funding/?searchquery=Music.

State Properties Data

655. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht further to Parliamentary Question No. 74 of 23 January 2018, the number of units which remain vacant held by Údarás na Gaeltachta; the number that have been leased; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [23698/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Joe McHugh): I have been informed by Údarás na Gaeltachta that out of the 106 units that were reported vacant in January 2018, that number now stands at 77, which represents a significant decrease. Details in respect of the vacant and leased properties in each Gaeltacht County is outlined in the table below.

In summary, of the 425 units in total held by An tÚdarás, 77 are currently reported vacant (18%).

County	Vacant	Leased	Total
Donegal	34	104	138
Mayo	12	34	46
Galway	28	131	159
Kerry	3	53	56
Cork	0	20	20
Waterford	0	2	2
Meath	0	4	4
Total	77	348	425

Údarás na Gaeltachta Data

656. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the extent of the undeveloped lands in the ownership of Údarás na Gaeltachta by county in tabular form; the length of time the lands have been in the ownership of Údarás na Gaeltachta; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [23699/18]

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 table.

Site	Year	Area (acres)	Address	current status
Ciarraí				

Questions - Written Answers

Site	Year	Area (acres)	Address	current status
Eastát Bhaile na Buaille	1980	21	Daingean Uí Chúis, Co. Chiarraí	Available for Development/ industrial/Enterprise Strategic site for future development
Inse Buí	1980	27.53	Inse Buí, Ciarraí Theas	Bog
Baile an Fheirtéaraigh Thiar	1980	6.44	Daingean Uí Chúis, Co. Chiarraí	Available for Development
Baile an Fheirtéaraigh Thoir	1980	3	Daingean Uí Chúis, Co. Chiarraí	Available for Development / Enterprise
Sliabh an Droichid	1980	3	An Clochán, Trá Lí, Co. Chiarraí	Development Planned
Corcaí				
Coláiste Iosagáin	1980	19	Baile Bhuirne, Co. Chorcaí	Available for Development
Réidh na nDoirí	1986	12.24	Maigh Chromtha, Co. Chorcaí	Available for Development
Cill na Martra	1980	1.4	Maigh Chromtha, Co. Chorcaí	Available for Development
Dún na nGall				
Páirc Ghnó Ghaoth Dobhair	1980	50	Bunbeag, Gaoth Dobhair, Co. Dhún na nGall	Available for Development/ Industrial/Enterprise
Gort a' Choirce	1980	16.66	Gort a' Choirce, Co. Dhún na nGall	Available for Development/ Industrial/Enterprise
An Tearmann	1996	3	Tearmann, Co. Dhún na nGall	Available for Development/ Industrial/Enterprise
Mín an Iolair	1980	0.25	Mín an Iolar, Gaoth Dobhair, Co. Dhún na nGall	Available for Development
Gaillimh				
Eastát Chasla	1980	8	Casla, Co. na Gaillimhe	Available for Development/ Industrial/enterprise

Site	Year	Area (acres)	Address	current status
Eastát Ros an Mhíl	1980	13	Ros an Mhíl, Co. na Gaillimhe	Available for Development/Industrial/marine
Eastát Charna	1980	6	Carna, Co. na Gaillimhe	Available for Development/Industrial/enterprise
Eastát Chorr na Móna	1980	4	Corr na Móna, Co. na Gaillimhe	Available for Development/Industrial/enterprise
Páirc Ghnó Pháirc na Meáin	1980	8	An Spidéal, Co. na Gaillimhe	Available for Development/Industrial/Enterprise
Eastát An Tulaigh	1980	12	An Tulaigh, Co. na Gaillimhe	Available for Development/Industrial/Enterprise
Eastát An Fhairche	1999	12	An Fhairche, Co. na Gaillimhe	Available for Development/Industrial/Enterprise
Páirc Ghnó na bhForbacha	1980	2.5	Na Forbacha, Co. na Gaillimhe	Available for Development/Office/Enterprise
Páirc Ghnó An Cheathrú Rua	1980	2.3	An Cheathrú Rua, Co. na Gaillimhe	Available for Development/Office/Enterprise
Páirc na Mara	1982	19	Cill Chiaráin, Co. na Gaillimhe	Available for Development/Industrial/Marine
Clochar na Lár	1980	300	Indreabhán, Co. na Gaillimhe	Bog
Clochar na gCón	1980	1012	Indreabhán, Co. na Gaillimhe	Bog
Baile Ard	1980	0.5	An Spidéal, Co. na Gaillimhe	Available for Development
Bóthar Maigh Cuilinn	1980	15.6	An Spidéal, Co. na Gaillimhe	Mountain land
Sráid Bhaile Carna	1980	1.5	Carna, Co. na Gaillimhe	Available for development/commercial

Site	Year	Area (acres)	Address	current status
An Cheathrú Rua	1980	4	An Cheathrú Rua, Co. na Gaillimhe	Available for development
An Spidéal Thiar	1980	7	An Spidéal, Co. na Gaillimhe	Available for development
Foirnis	1980	9	Leitir Mealláin, Co. na Gaillimhe	Available for development
Maigh Eo				
Eastát Ait Uí Chonáin	1984	2	Béal an Mhuirthhead, Co. Mhaigh Eo	Available for development/ Industrial/Enterprise
Eastát Bhéal an Mhuirthhead	1980	3	Béal an Mhuirthhead, Co. Mhaigh Eo	Available for development/ Industrial/Enterprise
Eastát Bhun an Choire	1986	4	Acaill, Co. Mhaigh Eo	Available for development/ Industrial/Enterprise
Na Muingí	1988	21	Béal an Mhuirthhead, Co. Mhaigh Eo	Available for Development/ Industrial/Enterprise
Inbhear	1980	6	Cnoc na Lobhar, Iorras, Co. Mhaigh Eo	Available for development
Ceathrú Thaidhg	1980	7	Cnoc an Daimh, Iorras, Co. Mhaigh Eo	Available for development/ Industrial
Góirtín Mór	1980	0.7	Tuar Mhic Éide, Co. Mhaigh Eo	Available for development

Ministerial Transport

657. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the number of ministerial cars or vehicles in operation in each of the past six years; and the costs associated with same. [24029/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): Arising from the Government's Decision of 2011 neither the Minister nor Minister(s) of State in the Department are provided with a ministerial car.