

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 17, inclusive, answered orally.

Questions Nos. 18 to 33, inclusive, resubmitted.

Questions Nos. 34 to 44, inclusive, answered orally.

Sports Funding

45. Deputy Noel Rock asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if grants to cover the costs of grassroots football coaching badges similar to those in Belgium will be offered; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25378/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin): Coaching is central to player development and it is important that competent coaches are available at grassroots level in all sports.

Sport Ireland Coaching, a unit within Sport Ireland, has the lead role for coaching in Ireland on an all island basis. Sport Ireland Coaching's main objectives include raising the standard, status and profile of coaching in Ireland to provide performers and participants with the best quality coaching through their involvement in sport.

Working in partnership with the National Governing Bodies of Sport and the wider sporting sector, Sport Ireland Coaching leads the development of coaching in Ireland through the implementation of a quality coach and tutor education support programme.

Sport Ireland does not provide funding to cover the costs of football coaching badges and I am informed that it has no current plans to fund such initiatives.

In relation to football, Sport Ireland invests in the Football Association of Ireland, primarily through the Youth Field Sports Grant. This investment is broadly aimed at encouraging and creating more opportunities for young people to participate in football across Ireland. Programmes are based on a shared ethos of developing the grassroots of the games, growing participation numbers, improving standards and embracing communities outside of the traditional base of the sport.

In 2017, Sport Ireland invested over €2.5 million in the FAI through the Field Sport Grant, of which €305,000 was allocated by the FAI toward the support of Coach Education.

Question No. 46 answered orally.

47. Deputy Kate O'Connell asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the benefits from the results of the recently published sports monitor; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25245/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin): The 2017 Irish Sports Monitor Report, published by Sport Ireland last month, is an insightful report providing important information on all aspects of adult participation in sport and physical activity. It also measures social participation in sport and provides key insights into the role that sport plays, not just in encouraging healthier, more active lifestyles, but also in fostering community spirit and developing social capital.

The report presents some very positive findings. It shows that 43% of the adult population regularly take part in sport, representing 1.6 million regular participants. It also shows that social participation among adults is currently at 45%, equivalent to 1.65 million adults. Overall, over 3 in 5 adults are involved in some way with sport.

I am pleased to note that there has been an increase in the proportion of the population that is highly active, with an increase from 30% to almost 33% of those now achieving the minimum level of activity set by the National Physical Activity Guidelines. I would like to see that figure higher than a third and we are going in the right direction.

I also welcome the narrowing of the gender gap in participation between men and women, which is now just 4.5%, the lowest recorded since the Irish Sports Monitor Report was introduced in 2007.

There are challenges for us in terms of increasing participation among the population generally and among those groups that are under-represented in sport. The important work being done by Sport Ireland, the Local Sports Partnerships and sports organisations at national and local level is key in helping to achieve greater levels of participation in sport right across our society.

The Deputy will be aware that my Department is currently finalising a National Sports Policy. The Irish Sports Monitor Reports have been extremely informative in the development of that Policy.

Bus Services

48. Deputy Brian Stanley asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if the provision of bus shelters on the main routes connecting Dublin, Cork and Limerick which are required in towns and villages on the route will be prioritised; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24964/18]

85. Deputy Brian Stanley asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if funding will be provided for bus shelters in Borris-in-Ossory, Castletown, Mountrath, Ballybrittas, Newtown and Ballylinan, County Laois which are vitally required; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24965/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 48 and 85 together.

As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport I have responsibility for policy and overall

funding in relation to public transport. The National Transport Authority (NTA) has responsibility for the development and implementation of public transport infrastructure including the provision of bus shelters.

The capital funding allocated under my Vote this year to the NTA will enable them to undertake substantial investment in public transport infrastructure. This includes over €80 million for the NTA's various bus programmes including €3 million for roadside infrastructure which includes bus stops, poles, turning areas, interchange locations and bus shelters.

As the Deputy will be aware from his previous correspondence with the NTA, and as I am advised, the Authority has developed a prioritisation framework to determine appropriate numbers and locations for the installation of bus shelters in metropolitan areas and in towns and rural areas. The NTA's prioritisation framework sets out the following criteria:

- A. One bus shelter in each direction at the busiest stop in all towns that have a population size exceeding 1,000 people;
- B. A bus shelter at the two busiest bus stops in each direction in towns that have a population size exceeding 3,000 people;
- C. A bus shelter at the three busiest bus stops in each direction in towns that have a population size exceeding 10,000 people; and
- D. In locations other than A, B and C where such stops are served by 10 or more PSO services per day.

I understand that NTA's general approach is that Bus shelters will not be provided in towns that do not fall under the criteria set out in their framework, however, requests for shelters at specific locations should be referred to the NTA for consideration.

Wild Atlantic Way Project

49. Deputy Aindrias Moynihan asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the progress of plans to promote areas such as the Lee Valley as being near the Wild Atlantic Way; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25282/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin): As the Deputy is aware, Fáilte Ireland has operational responsibility for regional tourism development and domestic tourism promotion and Tourism Ireland markets the island of Ireland overseas.

In this regard, I am informed that Fáilte Ireland are engaging in a programme to extend the concept of the Wild Atlantic Way to the wider region, as distinct from the Wild Atlantic Way route. This encompasses areas that are not on the Wild Atlantic Way route, but are part of the wider hinterland and whose main opportunity is to leverage the visitor already coming or going from the Wild Atlantic Way. The Lee Valley has been designated part of the Wild Atlantic Way region and is included in all Fáilte Ireland's development, promotional and business support activities.

Fáilte Ireland will be hosting a number of workshops in this area to explain how opportunities can be maximised and to make the most of the Wild Atlantic Way region brand. Furthermore, I understand that Tourism Ireland is working with Cork Airport and tourism industry partners to highlight Cork as a stand-alone destination and also as a gateway to both the Wild

Atlantic Way and Ireland's Ancient East.

For further information, I have referred the Deputy's question to the two tourism agencies for further information on their work in the Lee Valley Area. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within ten working days.

Transport Policy

50. Deputy John Curran asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the specific timelines for the publication of the NTA's integrated implementation plan for the greater Dublin area (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25394/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As the Deputy is aware, the National Transport Authority's (NTA) "Transport Strategy for the GDA 2016-2035" provides the overarching framework for the planning and delivery of transport infrastructure and services in the Greater Dublin Area (GDA) over the next two decades. The measures proposed in the Strategy are linked to the NTA's assessment of current and projected levels of travel demand across the region and they will be also subject to a number of influencing factors including funding availability.

In line with legislation, the NTA's Strategy will be supported and given effect through a series of successive implementation plans. Each implementation plan will be developed for a six-year period within the overall timeframe of the 20-year Strategy. An implementation plan will set out the investment priorities and proposals over for the following six years, having regard to the overall Strategy, and the progress already achieved on implementation.

In order to ensure that the priorities set out in Implementation Plan adequately reflect the significantly increased available funding that will now be made available for transport investment, it was considered appropriate to await the publication of the National Development Plan (NDP) and the National Planning Framework (NPF) before finalising the Implementation Plan. Following the publication earlier this year of Project Ireland 2040 (comprising both the NPF and the NDP), the NTA is now in a position to finalise a draft Integrated Implementation Plan for the next 6 year period. I understand that work on the draft Plan is underway and NTA will publish it for public consultation later this year.

Sports Capital Programme Applications

51. Deputy Pat Deering asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the steps which will be taken with regard to applications that were invalid in the 2017 SCP; when new applicants can expect to apply for funding; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25250/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The 2017 round of the Sports Capital Programme attracted a record 2,320 applications. In November and December last, Minister Ross and I announced €60m in allocations to a record 1,800 projects under the 2017 round. A review of the 2017 round of the programme has now been finalised and published on my Department's website (www.dttas.ie). This review highlights aspects of the 2017 round of the SCP that worked well but also suggests some further improvements which are being considered prior to the next round of the programme opening for applications. It is proposed that all applicants who were invalid, or partially invalid, under the 2017 round of the programme will be allowed to correct their applications for the 2018 round without the need to

submit a completely new application.

Some of the other changes being introduced for the 2018 round require amendments to the Department's online application system and work in this regard has now commenced. Formal sanction was received last week from the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform to open the new round of the programme. Accordingly, I expect to make an announcement in relation to the timing of the next round in the coming weeks. All clubs and organisations registered on the Department's online application system will be notified at that time.

Road Improvement Schemes

52. Deputy Michael McGrath asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the funding that will be made available to allow the construction of the Carrigaline western relief road, County Cork, to proceed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24338/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The improvement and maintenance of regional and local roads in its area is a statutory function of local authorities in accordance with the provisions of Section 13 of the Roads Act, 1993. Works on such roads are a matter for the relevant local authority to be funded from its own resources supplemented by State road grants. The initial selection and prioritisation of projects to be funded from these monies is a matter for each local authority.

Under the Strategic Grant Scheme, my Department gave a commitment in 2010 to provide grant assistance to Cork County Council in relation to the acquisition of land for the Carrigaline Western Relief Road. The commitment to part fund land acquisition on this road has been met but no grant commitment was given in relation to the construction of the road.

In the aftermath of the financial crisis there were major cutbacks in funding for the national, regional and local road network. This resulted in the severe curtailment in funding for road improvement grant programmes, including the Strategic Grant Scheme, in order to focus available funding on maintenance and renewal work.

The current capital investment framework marks a significant step forward in terms of restoring funding to the levels needed to maintain the road network in a "steady state" condition and allowing for some investment in road improvement schemes but it is going to take time for funding to build up to the required level. For now funding will largely continue to support the maintenance of the regional and local road network. While a limited number of improvement projects are scheduled to go ahead over the next few years, funding is not available to commit to additional schemes at this point.

My Department is, however, liaising with Cork County Council with a view to positioning the project for development in the post 2021 period.

Traffic Management

53. Deputy John Curran asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to alleviate congestion on the M50 in the short term in view of the continuing congestion on the M50 especially at peak times; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25393/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I fully recognise the pressures on transport infrastructure in the greater Dublin area, including on the M50.

Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) along with other stakeholders, is continuing to implement a number of measures on the M50 to manage demand and optimise operational efficiency, including:

- enhanced vehicle recovery services;
- establishment of an Interagency Incident Coordination Group;
- changes to merging and diverging layouts at junctions;
- the establishment of signed Emergency Diversion Routes;

and improved access for incident support and emergency services.

TII has also commenced a project titled ‘enhancing Motorway Operation Services’ which will include, *inter alia*, Variable Speed Limits and Lane Control Signalling.

The variable speed limit regime on the M50 will improve the operational efficiency of the motorway by smoothing traffic flow, improving journey time reliability and reducing the number of traffic collisions. Lane control signalling will also be installed as part of the project which will allow the closing off of lanes.

TII has provided an allocation of €7.5m in 2018 to progress the implementation of variable speed limits on the M50. It is expected that the variable speed limit regime will become operational in late 2019 or early 2020.

In addition, the National Development Plan, which was launched earlier this year by Government as part of Project Ireland 2040, identifies a number of key public transport priorities including the BusConnects programme, MetroLink and the DART expansion programme. These will be delivered by the National Transport Authority progressively and steadily over the short, medium and long term, to deliver a comprehensive public transport network that will match transport demand, alleviate congestion, provide an alternative to private car use and deliver a range of benefits over the next decade.

Tourism Promotion

54. Deputy Robert Troy asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to increase visitor numbers from China and Hong Kong in view of the new direct air links from Hong Kong and Beijing. [25406/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As an island destination, direct, convenient and competitive access services are critical to achieving growth in inbound tourism for Ireland.

A total of 129 million Chinese people travelled overseas in 2017, making China the world’s largest outbound travel market. Accordingly, China and Hong Kong are important emerging travel markets for Ireland. The new direct flights from Hong Kong and Beijing offer huge potential to build on progress made in recent years.

As the Deputy is aware, Tourism Ireland is responsible for marketing the island of Ireland in overseas tourism markets. It has a strong network in China, with offices in Shanghai, Beijing, Guangzhou and Chengdu. The organisation’s activity in China involves establishing and building relationships with influential intermediaries, including the travel trade, airlines and media.

To coincide with the launch of the new flight from Hong Kong, Tourism Ireland invited a group of journalists to visit Ireland and to help get positive exposure for Ireland and the new flight through the media in Hong Kong. Tourism Ireland also rolled out a multi-channel campaign with Cathay Pacific in Hong Kong and the Pearl River Delta Metropolitan Region in advance of the launch of the new flight between Hong Kong and Dublin. In addition, it has launched a new website in China, www.DiscoverIreland.cn. The new site, specifically designed for use on mobile devices, is hosted in China and is therefore more accessible for prospective Chinese visitors.

As part of Tourism Ireland's sales mission to China in May, meetings took place with representatives of both Hainan Airlines in Beijing and Cathay Pacific in Hong Kong, to discuss how to drive demand for and maximise the promotion of both services.

Tourism Ireland and Fáilte Ireland, along with Tourism NI, have developed and successfully piloted a 'China Ready' training programme for the industry here in Ireland. More than 20 tourism operators around the island of Ireland have already completed such a programme to help them prepare for Chinese visitors.

Sport and Recreational Development

55. Deputy Colm Brophy asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of the publication of the new national sports policy. [25269/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): In line with responses that have previously been given to this House in response to similar questions, the new national sports policy is nearing completion and will be published shortly, following its consideration by Government.

A very thorough and comprehensive process has been followed in the preparation of this new policy, which will set out Ireland's Vision for Sport in 2027 and the steps required to achieve this vision.

The consultative approach taken in relation to this policy is worthy of emphasis. We have had the benefit of over 50 submissions received as a result of a very useful public consultation process undertaken in late 2016. These submissions came from a wide range of stakeholders with a strong interest in the future of Irish sport, including Government departments, National Governing Bodies of Sport, Local Sports Partnerships and private individuals. I wish to formally record my appreciation of all those stakeholders that took the time and effort to give us their views.

Following close examination of these submissions, further meetings were held with certain stakeholders throughout the drafting of the Policy document. This in-depth process has informed decision making on the key challenges faced by the sport sector, and the complex issues that arise in addressing them.

I have previously outlined some key themes which emerged during this valuable process including:

- The vital role of education in the delivery of sports measures;
- The need for increased investment in sport, both in lifelong participation programmes as well as support for high performance athletes.

Questions - Written Answers

- The need for greater Cross-Sectoral Co-operation with sports stakeholders and relevant Government Departments, working more closely with Local Authorities in particular; and
- The importance of continued investment in Sports Facilities locally, regionally and nationally.

The new policy will be published next month and the important themes that I have just mentioned will feature prominently, as well as some other important aspects of sport such as integrity in sport, governance and capacity building, and research and evaluation.

Sports Capital Programme Applications

56. Deputy Shane Cassells asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the time-frame for receipt of applications and announcement of successful projects under the €50 million large scale infrastructure fund; and the criteria that will apply for the type of projects that can be received. [25412/18]

96. Deputy Peter Burke asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when a request for expressions of interest in the large scale projects under the sports capital programme will be issued. [25205/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin): I propose to take Questions Nos. 56 and 96 together.

The recently published National Development Plan (NDP) contains a commitment to establish a new “Large Scale Sport Infrastructure Fund” (LSSIF) with at least €100m available over the coming years. There is no funding provided for the programme in 2018. The amounts to be provided in 2019 and subsequently will be decided in the context of the annual estimates process.

In relation to the design of the scheme, my officials have been engaging with relevant stakeholders on the proposed terms and conditions of the new scheme in recent weeks. It is intended that the Fund will be for larger projects where the proposed Government contribution exceeds the amount currently available for individual projects under the Sports Capital Programme. At this stage, it is envisaged that the fund will be initially focused on the National Governing Bodies of Sport and Local Authorities and all projects will need to be fully compliant with the Public Spending Code and EU State Aid regulations. The possibility of adopting a two stream approach to cover both projects nearing construction stage but also those at an earlier stage of planning is also being actively considered.

My officials hope to have the draft terms and conditions of the new scheme finalised shortly and an announcement in relation to when applications will be accepted will be made once this work is complete.

Tourism Promotion

57. Deputy Peter Fitzpatrick asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of efforts to improve cross-Border tourism; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25315/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin): My Department has responsibility for the development of national tourism policy

while the tourism agencies have responsibility for the implementation of that policy. In that regard, Fáilte Ireland has responsibility for regional tourism development and domestic tourism promotion and it promotes all areas of Ireland as a tourism destination, including in Northern Ireland. Tourism Ireland is responsible for promoting the island of Ireland overseas as a tourism destination.

Furthermore, Fáilte Ireland, Tourism Northern Ireland and Tourism Ireland work together on an ongoing basis, including through regular tri-partite meetings, where improvements to cross – border tourism on the island of Ireland are discussed.

I have asked the tourism agencies to provide more information directly to the Deputy in regard to their efforts to improve cross-Border tourism. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within ten working days.

Question Heading

58. Deputy Noel Rock asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the detail of the preparations for the UEFA Euro 2020 tournament; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25377/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin): In 2014, Dublin won the right to host 4 matches of the UEFA EURO 2020 tournament comprising three group games and one second round game. The bid to host was a collaborative effort between the Football Association of Ireland, Dublin City Council and the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport.

Since then a Local Organising Structure (LOS) has been developed with the participation of the three main stakeholders and other organisations key to delivering the tournament. This structure includes a Project Board to oversee the overall project, a Project Working Group to manage it on a day-to-day basis and a number of sectorial sub-groups. The LOS is working closely with UEFA to meet their hosting requirements for EURO 2020 in areas such as the presentation of the stadium, broadcasting facilities, fanzones and spectator experience, transport, security, commercial rights protection, and national promotion.

The dates for the UEFA Euro 2020 matches were recently announced by UEFA. The dates on which matches will take place in Dublin are:

Monday 15th June

Friday 19th June

Wed 24th June

Tues 30th June (Round of 16)

The times of the matches have not yet been announced but the announcement of the dates will aid the preparations for the tournament in particular transport arrangements.

The first major event of EURO 2020 will be the live televised draw for the qualifying groups, which will take place on the 2nd of December 2018. In September last, the Dublin LOS won the bid to host this event and, accordingly, attendees representing UEFA's 55 National Associations will come to the Convention Centre Dublin for the event next December. It is expected that there will be 650 guests, including almost 300 delegates from the participating countries, 350 media representatives accredited to cover the event, and more than 70 broadcast-

ers to show the draw live to an audience of 140 million around the world.

Preparations for EURO 2020 will intensify over the next two years with the qualifying campaign kicking off with the new Nations League starting in September, tickets going on sale in 2019 and qualifying being completed in March 2020.

Appointments to State Boards

59. **Deputy Peter Fitzpatrick** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his views on the inclusion of persons with disabilities on the boards of public transport companies; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25316/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Since becoming a Minister, I have been particularly struck by the personal experiences related to me in my meetings with people with disabilities who use public transport. As a result of wide consultation with members of the disability community and with disability bodies striving to make an impact, I decided that the public transport companies under my aegis should each have at least one board member who has personal knowledge and experience of the needs and difficulties of people with disabilities using public transport.

The competition for the appointments to the Boards of the National Transport Authority (NTA), Dublin Bus, Bus Éireann and Irish Rail, is being run by the Public Appointments Service (PAS) and the closing date for applications was 27 April last. I expect to be in a position to appoint persons to the Boards in the coming weeks.

It is also my intention that a similar appointment should be made to the Board of CIÉ. As well as the public transport companies, I will be appointing a disability advocate to the Board of Sport Ireland and this process is also underway by PAS.

Road Safety Authority

60. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the quality assurances he undertakes with the Road Safety Authority to ensure that it is effectively carrying out its requisite duties regarding the administration of surrendered licences of disqualified drivers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24859/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): This is an operational matter for the Road Safety Authority (RSA). 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.

Transport Policy

61. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when the Irish Maritime Development Office will publish its study into the use of the UK landbridge; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24636/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The Irish Maritime Development Office (IMDO) in conjunction with my Department has undertaken a study into the use of the UK landbridge by Irish importers and exporters. The purpose of this research is

to establish the volume of traffic using the UK landbridge at present, the potential consequences that Brexit will have on landbridge usage and the various alternative options that may be viable. This Study is expected to be finalised this month and to be published shortly thereafter.

Anti-Social Behaviour

62. Deputy John Lahart asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of anti-social incidents that have been recorded on the DART line in each of the years 2016, 2017 and to date in 2018. [24334/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The safety and security of passengers and staff including arrangements to deal with anti-social behaviour on the DART is a matter for Iarnród Éireann in conjunction with, as appropriate, An Garda Síochána.

I have forwarded the Deputy's question to the Company for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within ten working days.

Motor Insurance Costs

63. Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his views on concerns of taxi drivers and the costs of car insurance; and his further views on the fact that many taxis are being priced out of the sector which will create a shortfall in services. [25314/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I agree that the increases in premium costs of motor insurance in recent years has certainly been a cause for concern for all drivers, including the owners of Small Public Service Vehicles (SPSVs). However, recent CSO figures show overall motor premiums for the year 2018 as being lower in comparison to those for the previous two years.

As you may know, the pricing of insurance products is a commercial issue for insurance companies, based on an assessment of the risks that 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.

The Department of Finance Working Group's Report on the Cost of Motor Insurance was published in January 2017. Based on recommendations from this report, the Advisory Committee on SPSVs met with Insurance Ireland on 22 May 2017 to discuss motor insurance costs relating to the taxi industry and a report on same was presented to me on 21 June. I have forwarded that report to the Minister of State at the Department of Finance and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, Michael D'Arcy, TD who is the chair of the aforementioned Working Group. The Advisory Committee on SPSVs and Insurance Ireland have agreed that there should be ongoing engagement between them and it is my hope that this cooperation and engagement will help to address the concerns of taxi drivers regarding motor insurance issues including the cost of same.

Insurance Ireland operates a free insurance information service for those who have queries, complaints or difficulties in obtaining insurance. All calls regarding refusal to quote, or quotations that are so excessive as to be in effect a refusal, should be directed to Insurance Ireland by

phone at (01) 676 1820, by email at *declined@insuranceireland.eu* or by post at 5 Harbourmaster Place, IFSC, Dublin 1 - quoting the Declined Cases Agreement.

Noise Pollution

64. Deputy Brendan Ryan asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he has reflected further on the decision to award Fingal County Council the role of noise monitor for Dublin Airport in view of political and public opposition; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25333/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The Government has made a decision that Fingal County Council shall be the Competent Authority for the purpose of EU Regulation 598/2014. This Government decision was based on an assessment that Fingal County Council represented the best available option for the timely and effective implementation of the Airport Noise Regulation, given that there is significant amount of focus on the interaction between EU Regulation 598/2014, the 2002 Environmental Noise Directive and the planning and development framework. It therefore makes sense for Fingal County Council to be appointed to undertake this role in order to ensure a fair and consistent approach to the assessment of development and the impact of aircraft noise at Dublin Airport. Importantly, the Government also decided to introduce primary legislation to give effect to the Regulation. I have every intention of bringing forward a Bill that strikes a balance between the rights of local residents, the daa as the regulated entity and the broader national interest in recognition of the crucial importance of our primary national airport.

Sports Capital Programme Administration

65. Deputy Kate O'Connell asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the way in which schools can benefit from the sports capital programme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25243/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin): The Sports Capital Programme (SCP) provides grants to assist in the development or refurbishment of sports facilities and the provision of sports equipment. Grants are available to sports clubs, voluntary and community groups, national governing bodies of sport, and local authorities. Third level colleges, Education and Training Boards (ETBs) and schools may also apply for funding but these applications must be made jointly with sports clubs or organisations. In this regard, organisations in the education sector must provide the Department with at least one licence agreement entered into with a local sports club or community group as evidence that the proposed facilities will be shared with the wider community.

A review of the 2017 round of the programme has now been finalised and published on my Department's website (www.dttas.ie) . This review highlights aspects of the 2017 round of the SCP that worked well but also suggests some further improvements which are being considered prior to the next round of the programme opening for applications. Amongst the recommendations is the need to increase the awareness of the Sports Capital Programme in the education sector and measures in this regard will be undertaken. Some of the other changes require amendments to the Department's online application system and work in this regard has now commenced. Formal sanction was received last week from the Minister from Public Expenditure and Reform to open the new round of the programme. Accordingly, I expect to make an announcement in relation to the timing of the next round in the coming weeks.

Tourism Policy

66. Deputy Maria Bailey asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the way in which the recent conference held in Dún Laoghaire on accessible tourism could inform ways to benefit Dublin's and Ireland's tourism industry; the follow-up action taken in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25317/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin): The accessible tourism conference recently held in Dun Laoghaire was the first of its kind to be held in Ireland. Accessible tourism is about making environments, venues and services suitable for the widest range of customers and is one of the fastest growing tourism segments in the world. This conference provided an opportunity for the tourism industry to prepare and to promote itself for the growing accessible tourism market.

Fáilte Ireland has operational responsibility for the development of the tourism industry including accessible tourism and I have asked them to provide the Deputy with more information on their work in this area. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within ten working days.

Traffic Management

67. Deputy Imelda Munster asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the options his Department is considering to manage traffic capacity issues on the M50; if the introduction of additional tolling is the preferred option; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25252/18]

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.

While the 2014 M50 Demand Management Study recommended the introduction of multi-point tolling on the M50, my consistent position has been that I do not propose to introduce such tolls as the likely impact of multi-point tolling would be to push vehicles on to other roads and through local communities.

My view is that the emphasis at this point needs to be on addressing congestion across the Greater Dublin Area (GDA) and 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 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.

As TII has operational responsibility for the M50, I have referred the Deputy's question to TII for direct reply in relation to the specific measures being taken and planned by TII regarding the operation of the M50. Please advise my private office if you don't receive a reply within 10 working days.

Rail Services Provision

68. Deputy Robert Troy asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of commitments to increase the frequency of the DART through the Phoenix Park tunnel to every

ten minutes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25407/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The Deputy appears to be raising two separate issues here as the DART does not currently run through the Phoenix Park Tunnel.

Since its reopening in November 2016, the Phoenix Park Tunnel has seen commuters on the Kildare to Dublin Heuston line benefit from having the option of direct trains to city centre stations such as Connolly, Tara, Pearse and Docklands. I am advised by National Transport Authority (NTA) that from December 2018 Maynooth services will be extended to off-peak periods as well as peak periods. Additional off-peak and weekend services from Kildare via the Phoenix Park Tunnel are expected by mid-2019.

I am also advised by NTA that an all-day 10 minute DART service will be introduced from September this year. In addition, procurement work has begun with an order expected to be placed in 2019 for hybrid diesel-electric rail fleet to provide an extended DART service across the Dublin rail network as envisaged in the National Development Plan.

Road Projects Status

69. Deputy Charlie McConalogue asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of the progress of the A5; the details of his engagement with his counterpart in Northern Ireland on the project; the funding that will be made available for the project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25395/18]

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.

EU Regulations

70. Deputy Clare Daly asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of the progress of the primary legislation necessary to give effect to EU Regulation 598/2014. [25030/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Since the Government decision in January this year to designate Fingal County Council as the Competent Authority for EU Regulation 598/2014, officials from my Department and the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government have been working on Draft Heads of a Bill. That work, I am advised, has been very detailed and technical in nature. It is primarily focusing on the interaction between the Noise Regulation, the EU Environmental Noise Directive and the planning framework.

It is obviously important that the proposed regulatory regime adheres fully to the requirements of the EU Regulation. It is also key that it dovetails with existing environmental and planning processes in a way that is implementable by the Competent Authority and understood by the regulated entity and all other stakeholders.

At a point when there is formal Draft Heads there will be more clarity on the timeframe for the legislative process. I can assure you that it is a priority for me and for my Department.

Cycling Facilities Provision

71. Deputy Brendan Ryan asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will consider a feasibility study for the provision of a segregated cycle lane to be constructed with the MetroLink project in the interests of increasing green and sustainable transport; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25334/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As the Deputy is aware the National Transport Authority (NTA) has responsibility for the development and implementation of public transport infrastructure in the Greater Dublin Area (GDA), including light rail and cycling.

Recently the NTA and Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) launched a public consultation on the details in relation to the “Emerging Preferred Route” for the MetroLink Project, which extends between Swords and Sandyford. I am not aware of any plans for the NTA or TII to carry out a feasibility study as suggested by the Deputy.

However I am delighted to inform the Deputy that the BusConnects programme, launched last year by the NTA, will address the needs of current and future cyclists as well as pedestrians and bus users. It is envisaged that BusConnects will see the delivery of a network of key cycle routes delivered as an integral component of the core bus corridors in and out of the city and not just confined to the corridor that will be served by MetroLink. These cycling facilities, provided along each corridor, will be segregated as far as practicable from other traffic.

NTA have calculated that, as part of the BusConnects investment, over 200kms of cycle tracks/lanes will be either built or current lanes improved. The cycling infrastructure delivered under this programme will deliver a radical step-change in cycling facilities in Dublin.

Transport Policy

72. Deputy Clare Daly asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will meet directly with representatives of the trade unions with a view to establishing a forum to agree a framework for discussion of the ongoing expansion of the transport system that gives certainty to transport workers. [25032/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As the Deputy is aware, as I had previously promised, on 21 May I hosted a round-table discussion on public transport policy, in the context of a wider work programme in my Department - on foot of a commitment in the Programme for a Partnership Government - to review public transport policy to ensure services are sustainable into the future and are meeting the needs of a modern economy and to develop a policy statement for the sector.

This stakeholder event brought together a wide range of representatives of consumer and passenger interests, public transport operators, unions, business groups, environmental inter-

ests, research institutes and the academic community, regulators, legislature and policy makers.

The round-table also allowed for an open and inclusive exchange of views among interested stakeholders and commentators, facilitated an open discussion about public transport policy, and let everyone put forward their views. The resulting discussions on potential challenges and competing priorities likely to arise in the future across all aspects of public transport provision including economic, social and environmental considerations will inform and enrich the policy review work currently on-going within the Department.

A report from the Chair of the Stakeholder forum, Professor Alan Barrett (ESRI) will be published for public consultation, along with papers and presentations that informed the debate and discussions during the round-table, and members of the public will have an opportunity to contribute to the discussion. Following this public consultation, I will assess, with my Department, the most suitable next steps in this policy review, including the format of any future additional consultative measures with stakeholders that are deemed necessary.

Rail Network Expansion

73. Deputy James Browne asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the position regarding plans for the development of the railway line in County Wexford; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25103/18]

116. Deputy Mick Wallace asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to invest in the Rosslare to Dublin rail line in order to improve line speed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24635/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 73 and 116 together.

The National Development Plan (NDP) notes the funding priority for the inter-urban rail network is to protect the investment already made in the national rail network, including the Wexford line, by funding projects needed to maintain safety and service levels in railway operations. The NDP also confirms a number of key investment priorities to address transport demand and deliver a range of benefits over the next ten years.

Noting the responsibilities of Iarnród Éireann and the National Transport Authority, I have forwarded your questions to both organisations for direct reply and further detail in relation to the questions raised. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a response within ten working days.

Sports Capital Programme Administration

74. Deputy Colm Brophy asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the position regarding the opening of the 2018 sports capital programme. [25268/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin): The 2017 round of the Sports Capital Programme attracted a record 2,320 applications. In November and December last, Minister Ross and I announced €60m in allocations to a record 1,800 projects under the 2017 round. A review of the 2017 round of the programme has now been finalised and published on my Department's website (www.dttas.ie). This review highlights aspects of the 2017 round of the SCP that worked well but also suggests some further improvements which are being considered prior to the next round of the programme open-

ing for applications. Some of these changes require amendments to the Department's online application system and work in this regard has now commenced. Formal sanction was received last week from the Minister from Public Expenditure and Reform to open the new round of the programme. Accordingly, I expect to make an announcement in relation to the timing of the next round in the coming weeks. All clubs and organisations registered on the Department's online application system will be notified at this time.

Bus Services

75. Deputy Aindrias Moynihan asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the progress of the Bus Éireann review of services in the Ballincollig area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25283/18]

95. Deputy Michael McGrath asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of plans made by Bus Éireann to the NTA to improve bus services (details supplied) in County Cork. [24339/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 75 and 95 together.

The issues raised are a matter for The National Transport Authority (NTA), in conjunction with Bus Éireann, and I have forwarded the Deputies questions to the NTA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within ten working days.

Legislative Programme

76. Deputy Dara Calleary asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his priority legislation for the remainder of this session of Dáil Éireann and the first session after the summer recess. [25409/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The priority legislation for my Department during the remainder of the current Dáil session is the Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill 2017. The Deputy may be aware that this is currently at the Report and Final Stages in the Dáil and will be referred to the Seanad afterwards.

In advance of the autumn/winter legislative session, the necessary preparatory work continues within my Department in relation to that session's proposed priority Bills. My priorities after the recess will be the Airport Noise Regulation Bill 2018, the Railway Safety Amendment Bill 2018 and also a Road Traffic Bill to deal with graduated penalties for speeding offences and the introduction of variable speed limits on certain roads.

Taxi Licences

77. Deputy Imelda Munster asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to amend section 15 of the Taxi Regulation Act 2013 to make it mandatory for holders of small public service vehicle licences to nominate a person to inherit their licence in the event of the death of the licenceholder; the other options that would ensure that small public service vehicle licences will be inherited in the event of the death of the licenceholder; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25251/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As the Deputy will be aware, the regulation of the small public service vehicle (SPSV) industry is a matter for the National Transport Authority (NTA) under the provisions of the Taxi Regulation Act 2013.

Section 15 of this Act provides that an SPSV licence may continue to be operated by a person who was nominated by the licence holder in advance of his or her death. This is a discretionary provision and I have no plans to change it at present.

However, in order to be of assistance, I have referred your question to the NTA for consideration and direct reply to you. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a response within 10 working days.

Rail Network Expansion

78. Deputy Catherine Martin asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of and proposed timeline for the development of the DART interconnector between Heuston Station and Spencer Dock. [25399/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): One of the features of Dublin's future transport infrastructure that is proposed in the National Transport Authority's (NTA) 'Transport Strategy for the GDA 2016-2035' is implementation of the full DART Expansion Programme. The DART Expansion Programme comprises several elements including: extensively extending electrification of the rail network around the capital city; purchasing new rail fleet; and constructing some new infrastructure, notably the underground interconnector project about which the Deputy is enquiring.

The recently published National Development Plan (NDP) 2018-2027 sets out the Government capital investment priorities for the coming decade. One of the many transport investments that we intend to undertake nationwide within that 10-year period is delivery of the priority elements of the overall DART Expansion Programme. These are the elements that the NTA has identified for priority delivery, and they are the non-tunnel elements of the Expansion Programme. The NTA's rationale is that, by sequencing these investments ahead of the tunnel element of the Programme, they will enable the investment benefits to be realised most quickly for the passenger through the speedier introduction of various important service improvements that will benefit the travelling public. Also, by optimising the delivery of both passenger and network benefits through a large NDP capital investment that builds first on optimising the existing rail infrastructure (including the Phoenix Park Tunnel), there should also be better value for money for the taxpayer.

The priority elements of the DART Expansion Programme that are scheduled for delivery within the NDP's 10-year horizon include:

- completion of the city centre re-signalling project, which allows more train movements across critical parts of the rail network and thereby allows for more and quicker services;
- investment in new train fleet, including a planned move to hybrid diesel-electric trains that can run on both the electrified and non-electrified parts of the rail network and thereby allow passenger services to be upgraded earlier (e.g. introducing higher frequency timetables) without having to wait until the electrification project is fully completed; and
- electrification of existing lines to create a full metropolitan area DART network for Dublin with all of the lines linked and connected.

The NDP investment in DART Expansion will focus on delivery of non-underground tunnel elements of the Programme, in order to provide significantly enhanced services on the existing rail network including better using the recently opened rail link and existing connector tunnel under the Phoenix Park. It will enable additional passenger services to be put in place much earlier using existing infrastructure with some enhancements. This integrated rail network will provide a core, high-capacity transit system for the region and will deliver a very substantial increase in peak-hour capacity on all lines from Drogheda, Maynooth, Celbridge/Hazelhatch and Greystones.

The remaining element of the overall DART Expansion Programme - the DART Underground Tunnel - is not scheduled for delivery within the period of the present NDP. However, over that time, it is envisaged that the route for the proposed project will be established and protected to allow for its future delivery.

Schools Healthy Living Strategies

79. Deputy Maria Bailey asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the way in which efforts to promote the daily mile in schools are progressing; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25318/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin): I consider that the Daily Mile initiative, which originated in Scotland about five years ago, can make an important contribution to the challenge of increasing the levels of physical activity in primary school children. As the Deputy may be aware, it involves teachers taking these children outside for 15 minutes each school day, when they can either run or walk around their playground. It has been found that about 50% of the children can typically run for a mile during that time, with others running slightly shorter or longer distances depending on individual capability. It is a fantastic initiative and I fully support it.

I had the privilege of being invited by Athletics Ireland to launch the initiative on a pilot basis in two schools in Dublin and Kerry in April. The programme is organised and run by Athletics Ireland, in cooperation with the Department of Education and Skills and the relevant school authorities. Its further roll out on a wider basis to other schools is accordingly an issue for consideration by those organising and running the programme. My Department or Sport Ireland does not have a function to exercise in that context.

While neither my Department nor Sport Ireland are in a position to decide on the extent to which the Daily Mile initiative may be rolled out to more schools, I would hope that this will prove possible. My Department will shortly launch its new National Sports Policy, which aims at increasing the level of sports participation across the population, with a particular focus on participation and physical literacy levels of school-aged children and young people. Engagement by schools with programmes such as the Daily Mile will be extremely important as we begin to implement the actions in this new Policy.

Greenways Development

80. Deputy Joe Carey asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his views on the Shannon greenway proposal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25207/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I aware of a mooted proposal with regard to the concept of a Shannon Greenway but no submission has been made

Questions - Written Answers

to my Department. I understand that this proposal is still very much in its infancy and that it's development would require collaboration with the relevant local authorities as well as Waterways Ireland and the Office of Public Works, in terms of flood defence works.

In the coming month I will launch the Greenways Strategy which will provide a framework for the development of Ireland's greenways and will determine the type of project to be funded by my Department over the coming decade. This is a long term Strategy with the aim of increasing the number, length and regional spread of greenways across the country. It will set out guidance to project promoters on matters including strategic nature, length, design standards, accommodation works and early consultation with communities and land owners along proposed routes.

It is important that the National Strategy for the future development of Greenways would be subject to in-depth consultation with relevant stakeholders. That consultation has now been completed and my officials are currently finalising the Strategy. This will be followed by call for applications later in 2018 with a view to awarding funding to a number of projects for drawdown between 2019 to 2021. In this regard, I was pleased to secure additional funding for greenways last year bringing the total available for the period 2018 to 2021 to €55.9m.

Given the increased interest in greenways in recent years I expect that there will be a strong response to this funding call. I would urge potential applicants for funding to progress their planning and design of greenways as far as possible in advance of any application for funding and to resolve any land ownership issues.

Tourism Promotion

81. Deputy Martin Heydon asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans in 2018 to further promote and enhance Ireland's Ancient East as a tourist destination for visitors from at home and abroad; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25281/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin): I believe that Ireland's Ancient East has very exciting potential and I was very pleased to recently announce a number of grants by Fáilte Ireland for the development of tourism attractions across Ireland's Ancient East. These investments combined with previous investments, work on the ground by Fáilte Ireland with the industry and marketing overseas by Tourism Ireland will help draw more tourists to the region.

Given their respective areas of responsibility, I have asked Fáilte Ireland to respond directly to the Deputy in regard to further development of the Ireland's Ancient East and its promotion to domestic tourists; and Tourism Ireland to respond in regard to overseas tourism marketing. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within ten working days.

Sports Capital Programme Data

82. Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the capital funding awarded to sports clubs in County Offaly since 2011 under the sports capital programme; when the next sports capital programme will be announced; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25248/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin): Details of all allocations under the Sports Capital Programme since 1998 are

published on a county basis on my Department's website <http://www.dttas.ie/sport/english/sports-capital-programme>.

The 2017 round of the Sports Capital Programme attracted a record 2,320 applications. In November and December last, Minister Ross and I announced €60m in allocations to a record 1,800 projects under the 2017 round. A review of the 2017 round of the programme has now been finalised and published on my Department's website (www.dttas.ie). This review highlights aspects of the 2017 round of the SCP that worked well but also suggests some further improvements which are being considered prior to the next round of the programme opening for applications. Some of these changes require amendments to the Department's online application system and work in this regard has now commenced. Last week, formal sanction was received from the Minister from Public Expenditure and Reform to open the new round of the programme. Accordingly, I expect to make an announcement in relation to the timing of the next round in the coming weeks.

Bus Services

83. Deputy Robert Troy asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if the number of bus routes that are privatised will not be increased in excess of the current 10%. [25403/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Under the Dublin Transport Authority Act 2008 it is a statutory function of the National Transport Authority (NTA) to determine the appropriate mix of directly awarded and competitively tendered Public Service Obligation (PSO) bus services. In this, it is subject to both national and EU legislation.

It is incorrect to describe competitive tendering as privatisation as nothing is being sold, services are not being deregulated and control remains with the NTA.

I have therefore referred 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.

Public Transport Fares

84. Deputy Mick Barry asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if his attention has been drawn to the fact that in Estonia there are plans to make public transport free at the point of use (details supplied); and if his Department will conduct a cost-benefit analysis to carry out same here. [25392/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I understand that free public transport is available in some European cities and towns to encourage increased use of public transport, reduce congestion, attract people into cities for leisure purposes and for environmental reasons among others.

In Ireland this year, the Exchequer will provide almost €300m as subvention for public transport services. This is additional to the passenger fares of about €500m per annum for these PSO services.

If these services were to be provided free to passengers, then it would be expected to cost the Exchequer would be in the range of that €500 million. This would be over and above the €300m already spent on subvention and the amount (€77m in 2017) that the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection pays to public transport providers in respect of its Free Travel Scheme which provides free transport to almost 1 million people in the State, including

all people aged over 66 living permanently here, along with some other qualifying people.

While I have no immediate plans to conduct a cost-benefit analysis of such a scheme which would require substantial additional funding by the taxpayer or from other sources, I am interested in hearing about innovative and radical ideas that would meet the needs of passengers, encourage more people out of their cars and onto public transport thus alleviating congestion and helping to tackle climate challenges.

Question No. 85 answered with Question No. 48.

Greenways Development

86. Deputy Tom Neville asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if the forthcoming greenway strategy will inform on the best way to undertake expanding the Great Southern Greenway; if he will discuss the matter further with officials of Limerick City and County Council further to his previous meetings with the officials; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25337/18]

91. Deputy Tom Neville asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his views on the tourism potential in expanding the Great Southern Greenway; if he will visit the greenway to view possible expansion options and discuss the matter with officials of Limerick City and County Council and cycle part of the trail; his further views on whether this would be a helpful exercise in the context of finalising the greenway strategy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25338/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 86 and 91 together.

The Greenways Strategy will provide a framework for the development of Ireland's greenways and will determine the type of project to be funded by my Department over the coming decade. This is a long term Strategy with the aim of increasing the number, length and regional spread of greenways across the country. It will set out guidance to project promoters including strategic nature, length, design standards, accommodation works and early consultation with communities and land owners along proposed routes.

I plan to publish the Strategy in the coming month following which I plan to announce a funding call later in 2018 with a view to awarding funding to a number of projects for draw-down between 2019 to 2021. I was pleased to secure additional funding for greenways last year bringing the total available for the period 2018 to 2021 to €55.9m.

There is no doubt that the extension of the Great Southern Greenway towards Limerick City and to Listowel/Tralee would increase the tourism potential of this route both in Limerick and Kerry. However, it will be a matter for Limerick City and County Council in the first instance to submit a proposal for any extension of the greenway under the next funding call, bearing in mind the criteria set out in the Strategy.

I understand that my Ministerial colleague Brendan Griffin met with Limerick City and County Council last year and was impressed by the significant work undertaken since the Council took over the Greenway from the voluntary organisation that had initiated its development. It is important that the Council continue with this work in order to be well placed in the upcoming competitive funding call.

Anti-Social Behaviour

87. Deputy John Lahart asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of anti-social incidents that have been reported on the Luas Green Line and Red Line in each of the years 2016, 2017 and to date in 2018, in tabular form. [24340/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The safety and security of passengers and staff including arrangements to deal with anti-social behaviour on the Luas is a matter for the transport operator (Transdev) in conjunction with, as appropriate, An Garda Síochána.

I have forwarded the Deputy's question to Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII), who have contracted Transdev to operate Luas, for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within ten working days.

Road Projects Expenditure

88. Deputy Niamh Smyth asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if funding for the extension of the M3 motorway to Cavan town, the N2 to motorway in County Monaghan and the east-west link will be considered; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24501/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Proposals to deliver an upgraded east-west route linking Dundalk to Sligo, taking in Cavan, involve linking elements of the national road network and regional roads along as direct a route as possible. Essentially the route involves upgrade/realignment works on the regional routes from Dundalk to Cavan and on national routes from Cavan to Sligo.

In relation to the national element 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 national road projects within its capital budget is a matter for Transport Infrastructure Ireland under the Roads Acts 1993-2015 in conjunction with the local authorities concerned. This is also the case for the M3 and N2 schemes mentioned by the Deputy.

Noting the above position, I have referred the Deputy's question to TII for direct reply in relation national roads. Please advise my private office if you don't receive a reply within 10 working days.

As regards the regional road aspect of a proposed east-west link, the improvement and maintenance of regional and local roads in its area is a statutory function of local authorities in accordance with the provisions of Section 13 of the Roads Act, 1993. Works on such roads are a matter for the relevant local authority to be funded from its own resources supplemented by State road grants.

My Department did provide funding to Cavan County Council (acting as lead authority with Monaghan and Louth County Councils) of over €2m in the period 2007-2014 to progress the regional road element of the project to preliminary design. At an estimated cost of the order of €150 million, it has not been possible to date to include the East-West Link in capital investment plans. I have, however, made an allocation available this year to allow an updated project appraisal for such a scheme to be prepared.

Questions - Written Answers
Military Aircraft Landings

89. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of the review of the Air Navigation (Carriage of Munitions of War, Weapons and Dangerous Goods) Order 1973 which was commenced more than a year ago. [25029/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The position remains as outlined in my response to the Deputy's questions on 24 April 2018 [17725/18].

My Department is continuing to progress the review with a view to it being concluded shortly.

Cycling Policy

90. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if cuts to the cycling budget over the past two years will be revised; if a statutory instrument for placing a minimum passing distance on a legislative basis will be published; and if he will publish the national greenway strategy. [25404/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): In relation to funding, I have no doubt the Deputy welcomes the increases I have secured over the 2018 to 2021 period. The next four years will see over €110million allocated to develop cycling and walking infrastructure in the Greater Dublin Area, Cork, Galway, Limerick and Waterford. In addition, I have also secured funding of €135million over the same period for sustainable transport projects in the five cities. These projects will also improve, directly and indirectly, both the cycling and walking infrastructure in the cities in question, and the efficiency and safety of their existing infrastructure.

As well as that, the significant investment planned in the BusConnects programme will also deliver an extensive new network of cycle lanes, greatly improving the safety of our cyclists. My Department also spends over €2.5million per annum on behavioural programmes to encourage a modal shift and to increase safety and awareness among all road users.

In relation to the minimum passing distance, draft regulations providing for an amendment to article 10 of the Road Traffic (Traffic & Parking) Regulations 1997 were submitted to the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel for consideration and settling. As that process identified a number of complex issues, legal advice was sought within the Office of the Attorney General. The Department is currently giving consideration to that advice and will shortly be engaging with the AGO to resolve outstanding issues.

Finally, as regards the National Greenways Strategy my Department is currently finalising the Strategy and I expect to be in a position to publish in the coming weeks. The Strategy will provide a framework for the development of Ireland's greenways ensuring the best possible return for State investment.

Furthermore, the Strategy will determine the type of project that will be funded over the coming decade by my Department and will set out guidance and options for project promoters in relation to the challenges faced in delivering greenway infrastructure. It will also emphasise the need for early and wide consultation by project promoters with communities and affected landowners.

Question No. 91 answered with Question No. 86.

Ports Merger

92. Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the timeline for the transfer of Dún Laoghaire Harbour Company to Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25417/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Dun Laoghaire Harbour Company (DLHC) is designated under National Ports Policy 2013 to transfer to Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council (DLRCoCo) and the process is still ongoing.

The Chief Executive of DLRCoCo undertook due diligence of the port company in preparation for transfer and presented her report to the Council on 9 January 2017. As the report raised a number of further issues for clarification, the CE engaged a financial consultant to carry out a risk assessment to enable the Council to fully understand the implications of the two different models of transfer and the responsibility that will transfer in financial and other terms. The CE presented the risk assessment report to the Council at a Special Meeting held on 6 March 2018. At that meeting the CE and the Council concluded that the most appropriate method of transfer for the company is the transfer and dissolution method.

I subsequently advised the Council in writing that my preferred model of transfer is the transfer and dissolution model for DLHC. When the transfer takes place, the company will be dissolved and all assets, employees and liabilities will transfer to the Council. I understand that the main issue now outstanding relates to remedial works in the harbour and how those works will be funded. My Department has been informed that there is no immediate Health and Safety issue with any pier in Dun Laoghaire harbour.

National Ports Policy clearly states that there is no Exchequer funding for any port company. It is normal procedure in port companies to prioritise engineering and remedial works and to phase those works and the funding to undertake those works, over a period of time (immediate, medium and long term). In addition Dun Laoghaire Harbour Company (DLHC) has a substantial asset which will transfer to the Council.

My officials are currently in touch with officials in the Department Housing, Planning and Local Government to finalise issues outstanding.

Insurance Data

93. Deputy Bobby Aylward asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the position regarding the release of information contained in two databases (details supplied) to potential new entrants to the Irish insurance market to encourage free and fair competition with new entrants able to enter and compete in the market here on a level playing field with existing market players; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24967/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Both databases referred to come under the remit of Insurance Ireland and all access to these databases is a matter for Insurance Ireland.

Section 5(1) of the Road Traffic Act 2014 enables the supply of data by my Department's National Vehicle and Driver (NVDF) to the insurance industry. Access is available to all vehicle insurers operating in the state who are registered with the Central Bank of Ireland.

Questions - Written Answers
Scoileanna Gaeilge agus Gaeltachta

94. D'fhiografiaigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Iompair, Turasóireachta agus Spóirt an bhfuil sé chun gach iarracht a dhéanamh a chinntí nach gcuirfidh forbairt Metrolink isteach ar fhorbairt Scoil Mhobhí agus Scoil Chairríona i nGlas Naón, ná ar an bpobal Gaeilge timpeall orthu; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [24335/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As the Deputy is aware the National Transport Authority (NTA) has responsibility for the development and implementation of public transport infrastructure in the Greater Dublin Area (GDA), including light rail. Recently the NTA and Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) launched a public consultation on the details in relation to the “Emerging Preferred Route” for the MetroLink Project, which extends between Swords and Sandyford.

The Emerging Preferred Route is the proposal which has been identified as the likely optimal scheme from a technical design perspective, without the benefit of public consultation and input. It is not a finalised and selected scheme – the final layout will only be determined after consideration and evaluation of the issues raised during the consultation process.

Following receipt of all of the submissions, the issues and concerns identified will be carefully considered by TII and the NTA in determining the final scheme proposal and a report will be prepared on the consultation process. It is envisaged that the public consultation report will be published later this year.

I understand the concerns raised by affected stakeholders including residents, local amenities and schools. I believe there are many benefits the Metro project can bring. The NTA and TII, through the consultative process they have underway, are working collaboratively to address concerns identified and to develop mitigating proposals. Their aim is to find a way of delivering the MetroLink project, while maintaining good routes that interchange with other public transport and doing it in such a way that respects the social and community life of our city.

Question No. 95 answered with Question No. 75.

Question No. 96 answered with Question No. 56.

Gender Equality

97. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to ensure equality between men and women in sport in view of the fact no woman appeared on the recently published report on 100 top sport earners. [25405/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin): The context of the Deputy's question relates to professional sport and the earnings accruing to any individual sportsperson or sport, which is not within the purview of my area of responsibility, or indeed that of Sport Ireland.

I would consider that the issue of securing equality between men and women in sport is fundamentally concerned with equality of opportunity and the provision of access to a variety of sporting activities that are of interest and are sought by men and women.

It is of course hugely important to ensure that men and women are equally as involved in all aspects of sport, and this is a key aim in our upcoming National Sports Policy. In terms of

the measures being taken to work towards equality, I think that the Deputy will be interested to hear that real and substantial progress is being made in the sports participation rates of men and women.

Just over a decade ago, in 2007, there was a gap of almost 16% in active participation levels between genders. In the intervening decade, we have narrowed this gap to just 4.5% in 2017 according to the recently published Irish Sports Monitor Annual Report.

In the last four years alone, Sport Ireland has allocated almost €2,400,000 in specific Women in Sport funding to 31 different National Governing Bodies of Sport. This investment is clearly delivering strong results.

We will continue to work towards the achievement of parity in the area of active participation in sport by gender. My Department's new National Sports Policy aims at increasing the levels of participation in sport and physical activity across the population over the next ten years, with a specific focus on less active groups including women and girls.

There is also significant work to be done in increasing involvement of women in areas such as coaching, administration and membership of Club and NGB boards. This will be a focus of our efforts to strengthen the overall capacity of sports organisations as part of our National Sports Policy. It is important to ensure that representation by women at all levels of sport is evident and becomes the norm into the future.

The new National Sports Policy will be published in July 2018.

Tourism Promotion

98. Deputy Peter Burke asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the way in which the Hidden Heartlands experience will be developed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25204/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I was very happy to launch the Ireland's Hidden Heartlands Brand earlier this year and I believe that the area has great potential. In this regard, the development of the concept and the operational development of the tourism brand experiences like Ireland's Hidden Heartlands is a matter for Fáilte Ireland, which operates under the aegis of my Department. Accordingly, I am referring the Deputy's question to Fáilte Ireland for information on how the experience will be developed. Please contact my private office if you have not received a reply within ten working days.

Road Projects Status

99. Deputy Charlie McConalogue asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of the Bonagee link road project in County Donegal; when the project will commence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25396/18]

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 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.

Ports Mergers Expenditure

100. Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of the transfer of Dún Laoghaire Harbour Company to Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25416/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Dun Laoghaire Harbour Company (DLHC) is designated under National Ports Policy 2013 to transfer to Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council (DLRCoCo) and the process is still ongoing.

The Chief Executive of DLRCoCo undertook due diligence of the port company in preparation for transfer and presented her report to the Council on 9 January 2017. As the report raised a number of further issues for clarification, the CE engaged a financial consultant to carry out a risk assessment to enable the Council to fully understand the implications of the two different models of transfer and the responsibility that will transfer in financial and other terms. The CE presented the risk assessment report to the Council at a Special Meeting held on 6 March 2018. At that meeting the CE and the Council concluded that the most appropriate method of transfer for the company is the transfer and dissolution method.

I subsequently advised the Council in writing that my preferred model of transfer is the transfer and dissolution model for DLHC. When the transfer takes place, the company will be dissolved and all assets, employees and liabilities will transfer to the Council. I understand that the main issue now outstanding relates to remedial works in the harbour and how those works will be funded. My Department has been informed that there is no immediate Health and Safety issue with any pier in Dun Laoghaire harbour.

National Ports Policy clearly states that there is no Exchequer funding for any port company. It is normal procedure in port companies to prioritise engineering and remedial works and to phase those works and the funding to undertake those works, over a period of time (immediate, medium and long term). In addition Dun Laoghaire Harbour Company (DLHC) has a substantial asset which will transfer to the Council.

My officials are currently in touch with officials in the Department Housing, Planning and Local Government to finalise issues outstanding.

Rail Network Expansion

101. Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will report on the consultative process with residents and affected stakeholders along the initially proposed MetroLink line in Dublin 7; his views on concerns raised; his plans to recommend an alternative route to the one proposed to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25313/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As the Deputy is aware the National Transport Authority (NTA) has responsibility for the development and implementation of public transport infrastructure in the Greater Dublin Area (GDA), including light rail. Recently the NTA and Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) launched a public consultation on the details in relation to the "Emerging Preferred Route" for the MetroLink Project,

which extends between Swords and Sandyford.

The Emerging Preferred Route is the proposal which has been identified as the likely optimal scheme from a technical design perspective, without the benefit of public consultation and input. It is not a finalised and selected scheme – the final layout will only be determined after consideration and evaluation of the issues raised during the consultation process.

Following receipt of all of the submissions, the issues and concerns identified will be carefully considered by TII and the NTA in determining the final scheme proposal and a report will be prepared on the consultation process. It is envisaged that the public consultation report will be published later this year.

I understand the concerns raised by affected stakeholders including residents, local amenities and schools. I believe there are many benefits the Metro project can bring. The NTA and TII, through the consultative process they have underway, are working collaboratively to address concerns identified and to develop mitigating proposals. Their aim is to find a way of delivering the MetroLink project, while maintaining good routes that interchange with other public transport and doing it in such a way that respects the social and community life of our city.

Irish Aviation Authority

102. Deputy Clare Daly asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport further to Parliamentary Question No. 202 of 30 May 2018, if the section 32 examination of the performance by the IAA of its functions in so far as they relate to the application and enforcement of technical and safety standards regarding aircraft and air navigation will be complete before the end of 2018 in view of the fact that the public tendering process to appoint the entity to conduct this examination has not yet commenced. [25028/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As I indicated in my reply to Question No. 202 of 30 May 2018, it is proposed that a competitive tendering process will be undertaken in relation to the appointment of an external party to carry out a Section 32 examination. My Department proposes to commence work on the tendering process shortly, and subject to a successful outcome to this I will seek to appoint a party to carry out the examination in accordance with the Irish Aviation Act 1993. The Act requires that a person is appointed to carry out an examination of the IAA's performance at least once in every three year period.

Cycling Facilities Provision

103. Deputy Eamon Ryan asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his views on the proposed cycle route along the seafront from Sandymount to Dún Laoghaire as part of the proposed Sutton to Sandycove route; and if the project will be allocated capital funding from the €110 million allocated for new urban cycling routes in the four year enhanced capital envelope outlined in budget 2018. [25401/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As the Deputy is aware, as Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport I have responsibility for policy and overall funding in relation to public and sustainable transport. With the increased multi-annual capital funding that I secured as part of Budget 2018, €110 million is specifically allocated to developing “active travel” (i.e. cycling and walking) infrastructure in the Greater Dublin Area,

and in the cities of Galway, Limerick, Cork and Waterford over the period 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. This investment is in addition to the substantial improvement in cycling infrastructure that will be carried out as part of both the BusConnects programme and the investment that is allocated for sustainable urban transport initiatives.

My Department allocates overall funding to the National Transport Authority (NTA) that is responsible for the development and implementation of public transport and sustainable transport infrastructure in the Greater Dublin Area (GDA), who provide onward funding to the various local authorities who progress and implement cycling infrastructure schemes. This includes the proposed Sutton to Sandycove route that forms part of GDA Cycle Network Plan which was published by the NTA in 2014.

The detail and timing of individual projects, including the proposed cycle route along the seafront from Sandymount to Dun Laoghaire as part of the proposed Sutton to Sandycove route, is a matter for the National Transport Authority working in conjunction with the relevant local authorities who progress the individual schemes.

Noting the NTA's responsibility in the matter, I have referred your question to the NTA for a more detailed reply with regard to this particular project. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

Sports Capital Programme Administration

104. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when he will consider a further tranche of major and minor capital sports grants to include swimming pools and other categories previously unable to qualify for various reasons; if he has examined the extent to which groups failed to qualify in the past with a view to addressing issues which may facilitate them in the future; if he will identify areas throughout the country to which special consideration may be provided on socio-economic grounds in both urban or rural settings; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25323/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin): The 2017 round of the Sports Capital Programme (SCP) attracted a record 2,320 applications and in November and December last, Minister Ross and I announced €60m in allocations to a record 1,800 projects. A review of the 2017 round of the programme has now been finalised and published on my Department's website (www.dttas.ie). This review highlights aspects of the 2017 round that worked well but also suggests some further improvements which are being considered prior to the next round of the programme. Formal sanction has now been received from the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform to open the new round of the programme and an announcement in relation to the timing of this 2018 round is expected in the coming weeks.

In relation to applications that do not qualify for funding, a number of measures were introduced for the 2017 round of the SCP with the aim of reducing the level of invalid applications. These measures included a shortened application form, the organisation of a series of regional seminars for potential applicants and more online validation to prevent applicants submitting incomplete applications. These measures were largely successful and the invalid rate for the 2017 round of the programme was the lowest ever at 20%. While this was good progress, I am committed to lowering this figure even further for the next round. In addition, all of the applicants who remain invalid following the conclusion of the 2017 round of the SCP have been

contacted and informed that under the new 2018 round of the SCP they will be given the opportunity to simply submit the corrected documentation needed to make their 2017 application valid (for the 2018 round of the SCP), without the requirement of going through a full new application process.

With regard to larger sports infrastructure including swimming pools, the recently published National Development Plan (NDP) contains a commitment to establish a new “Large Scale Sport Infrastructure Fund” (LSSIF) with at least €100m available over the coming years. My officials have been engaging with relevant stakeholders in recent weeks and are currently drafting the terms and conditions of the new scheme. An announcement in relation to when applications will be accepted will be made once these terms and conditions are finalised.

While the SCP already prioritises the needs of disadvantaged areas in the assessment of applications, the review of the 2017 round suggests that even greater weighting could be given to such applications. This is one of the changes being considered for the new 2018 round of the programme and it is intended that the LSSIF would also have an appropriate element of favourable weighting for projects in disadvantaged areas.

Rail Network Expansion

105. Deputy Eamon Ryan asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if different route alignments on the MetroLink proposal project that is in public consultation at the moment will be considered including a spur to Rathfarnham and alternative approaches to the upgrading of the green line to metro status. [25402/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As the Deputy is aware the National Transport Authority (NTA) has responsibility for the development and implementation of public transport infrastructure in the Greater Dublin Area (GDA), including light rail. Recently the NTA and Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) launched a public consultation on the details in relation to the “Emerging Preferred Route” for the MetroLink Project, which extends between Swords and Sandyford.

The Emerging Preferred Route is the proposal which has been identified as the likely optimal scheme from a technical design perspective, without the benefit of public consultation and input. It is not a finalised and selected scheme – the final layout will only be determined after consideration and evaluation of the issues raised during the consultation process.

Following receipt of all of the submissions, the issues and concerns identified will be carefully considered by TII and the NTA in determining the final scheme proposal and a report will be prepared on the consultation process. It is envisaged that the public consultation report will be published later this year.

Noting the responsibilities of the National Transport Authority and Transport Infrastructure Ireland in this matter, I have forwarded your questions to both organisations for direct reply and further detail in relation to the question raised. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a response within ten working days.

Tourism Promotion

106. Deputy Pat Deering asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his views on tourism potential in County Carlow following his recent visit and funding announcements; and

if he will make a statement on the matter. [25249/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin): I was happy to visit Carlow recently to announce a development grant of €48,000 to Duckett's Grove Historic House and Garden Park, awarded under Fáilte Ireland's Ireland's Ancient East Grants Scheme for Storytelling Interpretation. This grant is designed to improve the quality of physical interpretation at the site through a range of innovative resources including audio guides, video and interactive technology.

Carlow is a key player in the Ireland's Ancient East tourism experience brand with a wealth of experiences, culture and heritage available across the whole county, all year round. I am confident that such investment in attractions and further alignment and promotion of the county's overall tourism offering with the Ireland's Ancient East experience brand will enhance its appeal, grow visitor numbers and associated revenue and support employment.

Development of the tourism industry in our regions is an operational matter for Fáilte Ireland and I have asked Fáilte Ireland them to provide the Deputy with further information on Carlow's tourism potential. Please contact my private office if you do not hear from Fáilte within ten working days.

Airport Development Projects

107. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans for a third terminal in Dublin Airport; if he will reference rumours that such a terminal would be built on the western boundary of the airport in the vicinity of St. Margaret's village; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25335/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As the deputy is aware, daa holds statutory responsibility for the management, operation and development of Dublin Airport, including the provision of adequate capacity (e.g. terminal capacity) to meet current and future demand.

The Deputy will also be aware that, in order to ensure Dublin Airport, along with our other State airports at Cork and Shannon, are prepared for the longer term to 2050, an independent Review of their capacity needs is now underway. In the case of Dublin Airport only, the study is considering the time frame for the development of new terminal capacity – Terminal 3 – and its appropriate design and optimum location as well as an assessment of the relative advantages and disadvantages of the funding and operation of Terminal 3 by the existing airport operator in comparison to being operated on an independent basis.

I expect the review to be completed shortly and that its conclusions will inform any decision on where, when and how Terminal 3 might be progressed.

Transport Policy

108. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if the modal share targets set out in the smarter travel A Sustainable Transport Future, A New Transport Policy for Ireland 2009-2020 will be met; and the details of new modal share targets his Department may have in place. [25400/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As the Deputy is aware "A New Transport Policy for Ireland 2009-2020" sets out key modal share targets for achieve-

ment by 2020. These targets are aimed at reducing work-related commuting by car as a modal share of 65% to 45% and accommodating car drivers on other modes of transport such as walking, cycling, public transport and car sharing to the extent that commuting by these modes would rise to 55% by 2020 (or through other measures such as e-working).

Recent figures released from the Central Statistics Office (CSO) National Travel Survey of 2016 indicate that the use of private cars nationally for work commuting purposes has dropped from 67% in 2011 to 66% in 2016 . This has occurred against a background in the last few years of strong economic recovery, growth in the numbers of people at work, and consequent increases in travel demand and numbers of people commuting.

In the Greater Dublin Area there has been a much greater and a more significant modal shift. The Annual Canal Cordon Report recently published by Dublin City Council and the National Transport Authority - which provides data on trends in mode share of vehicles and people crossing the Canal Cordon in Dublin between 7am and 10am - indicates that a strong modal shift has been occurring in the Dublin City Centre area. It shows that 70% of all inbound trips crossing the canal cordon were made by a sustainable mode which includes cycling, walking, taxi and other public transport. Over the last 11 years, the share for sustainable modes has grown by 9 percentage points, and since 2010 there has continually been year-on-year growth. The most recent figures show that the mode share for cars has dropped to under 30% for the first time; it is now 29.2%, compared to 40% as recently as 2010.

In order to continue to build on this momentum and to encourage further modal shift nationally, I am pleased to inform the Deputy that I have secured over €110m in capital funding which is directly allocated to develop cycling and walking infrastructure in the Greater Dublin Area, Galway, Limerick, Cork and Waterford over the period 2018-2021. A further €135m 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. Investment of more than €750m on the Bus Connects Programme in the same period, will deliver a transformative investment package that will finance new and expanded bus routes, greatly improve bus access, and also includes the commencement of construction of core bus routes that include segregated cycle lanes and pedestrian footpath all which will greatly assist in encouraging modal shift. My Department also spends over €2.5m per annum on behavioural change programmes including Green Schools, Cycle Right and Smarter Travel Workplace and Campus programmes aimed at encouraging a modal shift.

As the Deputy may be aware my Department has commenced a review of public transport policy “to ensure services are sustainable into the future and are meeting the needs of a modern economy”. Work on this policy review is at an early stage and is currently drawing together data and information from many sources, including that discussed earlier, which will inform its work. My Department will continue to monitor trends in modal shift in order to inform future policies in the context of encouraging further modal shift from the private car to sustainable public transport modes.

Noise Pollution Legislation

109. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if a risk analysis has been conducted in regard to potential infringement proceedings being launched by the European Commission against Ireland on the appointment of Fingal County Council as the competent authority with regard to the process to be followed when adopting noise-related operating restrictions in view of the fact that per Article 3 of Regulation 598/2014 (details supplied) competent authorities must be independent of organisations which could be affected by

noise-related action. [25031/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The Government has made a decision that Fingal County Council shall be the Competent Authority for the purpose of EU Regulation 598/2014. This Government decision was based on an assessment that Fingal County Council represented the best available option for the timely and effective implementation of the Airport Noise Regulation, given that there is significant amount of focus on the interaction between EU Regulation 598/2014, the 2002 Environmental Noise Directive and the planning and development framework. It therefore makes sense for Fingal County Council to be appointed to undertake this role in order to ensure a fair and consistent approach to the assessment of development and the impact of aircraft noise at Dublin Airport.

The process that will be put in place for the implementation of EU Regulation 598/2014 will be supported by primary legislation which will ensure that Fingal County Council will have the legal basis to carry out its functions in full accordance with the Regulation. I am confident that the arrangement will represent the best interests of all stakeholders, will be transparent and independent and will fully meet all the requirements set out in the Regulation.

Tourism Promotion

110. **Deputy Joe Carey** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of the effectiveness of the Wonders of the Wild Atlantic Way marketing campaign; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25206/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): My Department's role in relation to tourism lies in the area of national tourism policy while the tourism agencies have operational responsibility for the implementation of this policy.

In January 2018, Minister Griffin launched the "Wonders of the Wild Atlantic Way" joint Tourism Ireland and Fáilte Ireland marketing initiative, specially designed to boost tourist numbers from Britain to the Wild Atlantic Way. A €1.35 million marketing campaign in Britain is being complemented by an additional €500,000 Fáilte Ireland programme to support businesses along the Wild Atlantic Way to position themselves to benefit from the campaign, as well as to boost its own marketing campaigns in Northern Ireland.

The key focus of the campaign is to extend the holiday season beyond the peak summer months, by enticing people to visit in the spring and autumn. Phase one of Tourism Ireland's marketing campaign was rolled out in Britain in February and March and with phase two scheduled for September and October.

Some 300 eye-catching billboard ads are highlighting the Wild Atlantic Way in key roadside and city centre locations across Britain right now. The ads feature strong and iconic images of various locations along the Wild Atlantic Way and the key message is the quick and easy access from Britain to those spectacular locations in under two hours. The campaign, which will reach at least ten million potential holidaymakers around Britain, is highlighting ease of direct access from six British gateway cities (London, Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham, Edinburgh and Glasgow) to Cork, Kerry, Shannon, Knock, Donegal and City of Derry airports. An important element of this campaign is the co-operative advertising with airlines flying to airports close to the Wild Atlantic Way – highlighting good value offers and ease of access, helping to convert interest into business.

While it is too early to report on the effectiveness of the campaign as yet, I look forward to hearing from the tourism agencies later in the year in this regard.

Road Traffic Offences

111. Deputy Thomas P. Broughan asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the way in which he plans to improve the surrendering of licences from disqualified drivers to the Road Safety Authority in view of the fact that just 1,289 of the 9,449 drivers disqualified in court in 2017 surrendered their licences; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24858/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Under Regulations 45 and 46 of the Road Traffic (Licensing of Drivers) Regulations 2006 (S.I. No. 537 of 2006), as amended, those drivers who are subject to a consequential, ancillary or special disqualification are required to return their driving licence to the Road Safety Authority (RSA). These are penal provisions.

It is not acceptable that so many people do not comply with this legal requirement, and do not return their licences. At the same time, it is important to bear in mind that the matter of greatest concern here is whether people are driving while disqualified, and non-return of licences cannot be taken as a proxy measurement for those driving while disqualified. A person who has retained the physical licence may not be driving, while a person who has returned the licence might continue to drive.

The penalty for driving while disqualified is fine up to a maximum of €5,000 and/or a prison term of up to 6 months. The penalty for non-return of a driving licence is the general penalty under the Road Traffic Acts, namely a fine of up to €1,000 for a first offence, up to €2,000 for a second offence, and up to €2,000 and/or up to 3 months in prison for a third or subsequent offence in a 12 month period.

As of 2014, Gardaí have the power to arrest those suspected of driving while disqualified, which is an important tool in dealing with the dangerous behaviour of driving while disqualified.

I am satisfied that the legislation is adequate both in creating these offences along with the penalties prescribed therein and that the necessary powers have been given to the Gardaí to effectively deal with the issue.

Enforcement of the legislation is a matter for An Garda Síochána.

Tourism Funding

112. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the extent to which investment in tourism infrastructure will continue with a view to ensuring maximisation of Ireland's impact on the tourism market, availing of every opportunity to bring tourists here with consequent economic benefit and promotion of Irish culture and heritage; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25324/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin): My Department's role in relation to tourism lies primarily in the area of national tourism policy development, whereas the tourism agencies have operational responsibility for the implementation of this policy. With regard to the tourism product, my Department provides capital funding to Fáilte Ireland for investment in tourism.

As set out in the National Development Plan 2018-2027, almost €108 million has been allocated to Fáilte Ireland for capital investment over the next four years and it is intended that

this level of funding will, at a minimum, be maintained over the lifetime of the National Development Plan.

Priority areas for tourism capital investment through Fáilte Ireland's programmes include the development and enhancement of tourist attractions and activity-based tourism to provide the type and quality of experience that visitors are seeking. This investment will support and grow tourism across Ireland, in line with the further development and promotion of the regional tourism brand experiences.

With specific regard to promoting and leveraging the appeal of Ireland's culture and heritage, these are an intrinsic element of all the tourism experience brands but are particularly to the fore in Ireland's Ancient East, which has an especially rich and diverse range of cultural heritage experiences including passage tombs, monastic sites and medieval castles.

Overall, capital investment in Ireland's tourism product aims to continue to motivate large numbers of international tourists to visit the country, with the ultimate goal being to deliver sustainable growth for Irish tourism, resulting in higher revenue and additional jobs.

Road Improvement Schemes

113. Deputy Bobby Aylward asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the position regarding the progress of the proposed overbridge at the N24 Piltown bypass at Tower Road; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24966/18]

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 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.

Dublin Bus Services

114. Deputy Bríd Smith asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to alleviate the delays and service cancellations affecting Dublin Bus services as a result of traffic congestion and the operation of the Luas cross city; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25410/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Following a period of reduced transport usage and suppressed transport growth during the economic recession, Ireland's transport activity and demand has been growing again and is expected to expand further in future years in line with forecast economic growth rates. This higher demand is evidenced in the NTA's recent published Bus & Rail Statistics bulletin that shows a percentage growth of PSO passenger journeys in the Dublin Region at 21.1% and 23.4% for Dublin Bus and Luas respectively between 2013 and 2017. In 2017 alone Dublin Bus carried 136.26 million passenger journeys and Luas carried 37.65 million. While these figures are encouraging, they highlight why the major investment in public transport outlined in the recently published National Devel-

opment Plan (NDP) 2018-2027 is needed to respond appropriately to this growth and to address the congestion problems of the Dublin region.

A number of key investment priorities across the Dublin region are set out in the NDP which will address congestion in Dublin and capacity constraints on the existing public transport network. These projects include investing in the existing road, rail and bus network, BusConnects, MetroLink and priority elements of the DART Expansion Programme. Planning of the large projects is now underway and they are scheduled for delivery progressively over the lifetime of the 10-year NDP. Meanwhile, in the shorter term, various measures and schemes are being taken to ensure more efficient functioning of transport within Dublin city centre; these involve the National Transport Authority (NTA) working with local authorities and agencies and public transport operators.

While the recently opened extension to the Luas Green Line is realising substantial benefits for customers and for Dublin, it has experienced a number of problems in its first few months of operations. All parties have worked hard to overcome these problems including An Garda Síochána who have supported the smooth functioning of trams across key city centre junction by regularly patrolling it in peak periods. I would also like to acknowledge the continual improvements Dublin City Council make to the signalised junctions on the shared-running sections of the Luas system and also on key bus routes in and out of the city. Such fine-tuning of the signals is an essential on-going support to the Bus and Luas system and traffic management in general.

In relation to bus services, the 2017 performance by Dublin Bus was very strong and the company provided the largest annual number of passenger journeys in 2017 at approximately 136 million. This represents an increase of over 10% on 2016 and also represents five straight years of passenger growth. Against this backdrop 140 new buses are being purchased in 2018 for the Dublin Bus fleet to replace older buses and cater for market growth and new routes. This will bring the total fleet up to almost 1100 buses, with a further expansion of the fleet expected in 2019 in advance of the roll-out of BusConnects. Passengers will also see service improvements coming from bus market opening with, as recently announced, October 2018 seeing the commencement of an increase of service capacity of about 35% across the 24 routes involved.

Looking to the medium term, the BusConnects Programme aims to transform the bus system in Dublin. It will include: a full redesign of the bus network in order to provide a better and more efficient network for passengers; an expanded and modern fleet of vehicles; new road infrastructure to facilitate bus priority and faster journeys for public transport users; improved passenger information and ticketing technology; and transition to a lower emission bus fleet. The public will be fully informed by NTA about the BusConnects programme as it progresses and will have the opportunity to input at various stages to its development. Over the coming weeks and months there will be number of informative stages. Firstly, the NTA plans shortly to publish an information report about the 16 pathways that are emerging as the likely core bus corridors in and out of the city under the new investment Programme. Secondly, the NTA will conduct a public consultation on redesign of Dublin's bus network, including proposals on a major redesign of routes, schedules and fare structures. Thirdly, the NTA then plans to hold a public consultation on the emerging proposals for the 16 core bus corridors.

Passenger numbers on Luas also increased (up 10.5% in 2017), which represents 3.6 million more passenger journeys compared to 2016. The Luas Cross City extension boosted numbers using the Green Line by around 24% in January 2018 compared to January 2017. This shows that demand for Green Line services has grown significantly, now that it has been extended to Broombridge and provides interchange with the Red Line and greater connectivity to mainline and DART rail services. As such, passenger numbers are likely to continue to grow in 2018 and beyond.

Again looking to the future, a number of Luas related measures will be implemented to cater for this demand. A new timetable will be published in June to make best use of the new 55-metre trams that have been introduced with Luas Cross City and also a shuttle service between Heuston and Connolly. It is intended to add further additional Green Line Luas Capacity, by lengthening the 26 existing trams from 43m to 55m. The first extended tram will come online in late 2019, and the final by late 2021. Beyond that it is intended that a further 8 new 55m trams will be delivered and introduced into service.

All the planned investment in public transport, short, medium and long-term, combined will add greatly to the level of service available for the travelling public, connecting more people with more places, easing congestion and combatting climate change.

Córas Iompair Éireann

115. Deputy Mick Barry asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will report on his comments at the recent public transport round-table event regarding the possibility of an employee share ownership scheme being introduced in the CIÉ group; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25391/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As the Deputy is aware, on 21 May 2018 I hosted a round-table dialogue on public transport policy as part of work by my Department - in line with a commitment in the Programme for a Partnership Government - to review public transport policy to ensure services are sustainable into the future and are meeting the needs of a modern economy and to develop a policy statement for the sector.

This stakeholder event brought together a wide range of representatives of consumer and passenger interests, public transport operators, unions, business groups, environmental interests, research institutes and the academic community, regulators, and policy makers. A wide variety of issues significant to the public transport sector were discussed, including potential challenges and competing priorities likely to arise in the future across all aspects of public transport provision including economic, social and environmental considerations.

At the close of the event, I put forward a proposal for possible share options for workers in the CIE Group of companies and indicated I would ask for NewERA to examine the proposal. As I emphasised at the time, my suggestion is in no way linked to an intention for privatisation. Rather, I am interested in seeing how such a scheme could be implemented and how it would align with the interests of passengers, the staff and management. NewERA has now been asked to progress this initiative and will be advising me on the matter in the near future.

Question No. 116 answered with Question No. 73.

Rail Network Expansion

117. Deputy Shane Cassells asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the impact the draft regional spatial and economic strategy for the eastern and midlands area which sets out restrictive population numbers for County Meath will have on the completion of the second phase of the Navan to Dublin rail line project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25413/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The Navan Rail Link

Project was originally included under the Transport 21 Initiative and was to be developed in two Phases. Phase 1 comprised the Dunboyne Rail Line project and involved the reopening of 7.5km of a railway line running off the Maynooth line, at Clonsilla, to the M3 interchange at Pace near Dunboyne. This was opened in September 2010 with Park and Ride facilities for 1,200 at Pace and for 300 at Dunboyne. The plan for Phase 2 involved the extension of the Dunboyne Line between Clonsilla and M3 Parkway Station, onwards to north Navan. This development together with a number of other transport projects was postponed in 2011 due to the economic and fiscal crisis.

The National Transport Authority (NTA), which has statutory responsibility for development of Public Transport in the Greater Dublin Area (GDA), included an examination of the Navan to City Centre Rail Corridor in the preparation of its “Transport Strategy for the GDA for the period 2016-2035”. At that time the NTA concluded that, based on population and employment forecasts, the level of travel demand between Navan, Dunshaughlin and various stations to the city centre was insufficient to justify the development of a high-capacity rail link. Instead it proposed that an enhanced bus service would be provided along the corridor in conjunction with the development of a bus hub by the local authority in Navan. This position will be kept under review by the NTA and will be reassessed as part of the next review of its GDA Transport Strategy which is due before the end of 2021.

The Government’s recently published Project Ireland 2040, comprising the National Planning Framework (NPF) and the National Development Plan (NDP), confirms a number of key public transport investment priorities. It also recognises that over the period of the plan it will be very important to examine the role that the interurban rail network can play in enhancing regional connectivity. In this regard, the NDP notes that the NTA is required to review its Greater Dublin Area Transport Strategy every six years and by the end of 2021. This review will include a reappraisal of the proposed extension of the Dunboyne/M3 Parkway line to Navan taking into account the scale of new and planned development along the route, and this will allow for its consideration during the NDP Mid-Term Review.

I understand that the Eastern & Midland Regional Assembly are currently preparing the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Eastern and Midland Region, to ensure better co-ordination in planning and development policy matters across boundaries, as provided for under the Local Government Reform Act 2014. The process of preparing the RSES for this region, that takes the high-level framework and principles of the NPF and works out more detail at regional and local authority levels, also involves consultation with a number of Stakeholders including the NTA.

Employment Data

118. Deputy John Lahart asked the Taoiseach the percentage of the workforce employed in temporary, part-time, non-permanent, contract, banded hours and zero-hours contracts and other non-permanent employment; and the number in non-permanent employment since 2015, in tabular form. [25583/18]

Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach (Deputy Joe McHugh): The Labour Force Survey (LFS) is the official source of estimates of labour force (ILO) in the State. This survey replaced the Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS) from Q3 2017. The most recent figures available are for Q4 2017.

The CSO collects information on the number of persons in permanent or non-permanent and full-time or part-time work contracts. However, the CSO does not collect any specific informa-

Questions - Written Answers

tion on the nature of non-permanent employment contracts such as those involving banded or zero hours. As a result, the exact information requested by the Deputy is not available.

The data prior to Q3 2017 includes adjustments to the historic QNHS data series to take account of revisions to population estimates arising from the 2016 Census of Population. In addition, adjustments have been made to this historic data to enable comparability with the new LFS for key headline indicators – ILO employment status, NACE Rev2 Industrial classification, age and gender.

However as a result of changes to the questionnaire, the interview mode, the introduction of a new sample, data processing changes and other methodological enhancements there are changes in the levels of some series outside of these key indicators from Q3 2017 onwards. As a consequence, the series before and after the introduction of the new survey may not be directly comparable and this should be noted when examining annual and quarterly changes.

Table 1 below shows the number of employees (ILO) aged 15 years and over in part-time employment with temporary job/work contract of limited duration as a percentage of total employees (including not stated) from Q1 2015 to Q4 2017.

Table 2 below shows the number of employees (ILO) aged 15 years and over classified by permanency of job from Q1 2015 to Q4 2017.

Table 1 Employees (ILO) aged 15 years and over in part-time employment with temporary job/work contract of limited duration as a percentage of total employees (including not stated), Q1 2015-Q4 2016

-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1%
	Q1 15	Q2 15	Q3 15	Q4 15	Q1 16	Q2 16	Q3 16	Q4 16	
Employees (ILO) aged 15 years and over in part-time employment with temporary job/work contract of limited duration as a percentage of total employees (including not stated)	5.4	5.8	5.8	5.1	4.9	5.7	5.4	5.0	

Table 1 (cont'd) Employees (ILO) aged 15 years and over in part-time employment with temporary job/work contract of limited duration as a percentage of total employees (including not stated), Q1 2017 - Q4 2017

-	-	-	-	1%
	Q1 17	Q2 17	Q3 17	Q4 17

-	-	-	-	1%
Employees (ILO) aged 15 years and over in part-time employment with temporary job/work contract of limited duration as a percentage of total employees (including not stated)	4.5	4.7	6.3	6.1

Source: Labour Force Survey (LFS), Central Statistics Office, Ireland.

Data may be subject to future revision.

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

Reference period: q1=Jan-Mar, q2=Apr-Jun, q3=Jul-Sep, q4=Oct-Dec.

Note: A new Labour Force Survey (LFS) replaced the Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS) in Q3 2017 and, as a result, care should be taken when comparing data from before and after this period. Please see background notes of the LFS release for additional information.

Table 2 Employees (ILO) aged 15 years and over classified by permanency of job and full-time/part-employment, Q1 2015-Q4 2016

-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	'000
	Q1 15	Q2 15	Q3 15	Q4 15	Q1 16	Q2 16	Q3 16	Q4 16
Person has a permanent job or work contract of unlimited duration	1,509.2	1,521.6	1,544.0	1,572.9	1,571.9	1,586.1	1,616.5	1,648.5
of which:								
full-time employment	1,199.5	1,209.3	1,235.6	1,256.3	1,252.3	1,268.9	1,291.8	1,329.7

Questions - Written Answers

-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	'000
part-time employment	309.7	312.3	308.4	316.6	319.6	317.2	324.7	318.8
Person has a temporary job/work contract of limited duration	155.5	165.6	176.0	151.8	142.7	165.4	169.4	153.4
of which:								
full-time employment	64.1	65.9	74.5	62.0	57.3	63.1	72.0	62.3
part-time employment	91.4	99.6	101.4	89.9	85.5	102.3	97.4	91.1
Not stated	20.5	22.3	22.5	23.7	24.8	27.7	27.5	24.4
of which:								
full-time employment	9.1	10.8	10.2	10.1	10.5	11.8	12.2	10.4
part-time employment	11.4	11.5	12.4	13.6	14.3	15.9	15.3	14.0
Total employees	1,685.1	1,709.5	1,742.5	1,748.4	1,739.4	1,779.3	1,813.5	1,826.2
of which:								

-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	'000
full-time employment	1,272.7	1,286.0	1,320.3	1,328.4	1,320.0	1,343.8	1,376.0	1,402.4	
part-time employment	412.5	423.5	422.2	420.1	419.3	435.5	437.4	423.8	

Table 2 (cont'd) Employees (ILO) aged 15 years and over classified by permanency of job and full-time/part-employment, Q1 2017-Q4 2017

-	-	-	-	-	'000
	Q1 17	Q2 17	Q3 17	Q4 17	
Person has a permanent job or work contract of unlimited duration	1,669.9	1,678.0	1,658.7	1,686.4	
of which:					
full-time employment	1,345.6	1,367.1	1,387.9	1,400.6	
part-time employment	324.3	310.9	270.7	285.8	
Person has a temporary job/ work contract of limited duration	138.9	145.1	202.0	188.2	
of which:					
full-time employment	56.4	57.5	85.0	73.0	
part-time employment	82.6	87.6	117.0	115.2	
Not stated	22.3	22.8	8.1	8.9	
of which:					
full-time employment	8.2	9.4	[5.8]	[6.6]	
part-time employment	14.1	13.4	*	*	
Total employees	1,831.1	1,846.0	1,868.8	1,883.5	
of which:					
full-time employment	1,410.2	1,434.0	1,478.8	1,480.2	
part-time employment	420.9	411.9	390.0	403.3	

Source: Labour Force Survey (LFS), Central Statistics Office, Ireland.

Questions - Written Answers

* Estimates for numbers of persons or averages where there are less than 30 persons in a cell are not produced as estimates are too small to be considered reliable.

Parentheses [] indicate where there are 30-49 persons in a cell, estimates are considered to have a wider margin of error and should be treated with caution.

Data may be subject to future revision.

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

Reference period: q1=Jan-Mar, q2=Apr-Jun, q3=Jul-Sep, q4=Oct-Dec.

Note: A new Labour Force Survey (LFS) replaced the Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS) in Q3 2017 and, as a result, care should be taken when comparing data from before and after this period. Please see background notes of the LFS release for additional information.

Cabinet Committee Meetings

119. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach the number of Cabinet committees he held in May 2018. [25359/18]

The Taoiseach: There were no Cabinet Committee meetings held in May 2018. However, there were 2 Cabinet Committee meetings held in April and a meeting of the Cabinet Committee B on 7 June. Further Cabinet Committee meetings are scheduled for later this month.

EU Meetings

120. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach if he has spoken collectively or on an individual basis with EU leaders since the most recent European summit. [25656/18]

121. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach if he has written to or spoken with the Hungarian Prime Minister, Mr. Viktor Orbán, recently. [24561/18]

122. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach if he has spoken to the Prime Minister of Italy since his appointment. [24562/18]

The Taoiseach: I propose to take Questions Nos. 120 to 122, inclusive, together.

I last met with Prime Minister Viktor Orban on 4 January 2018, and I reported extensively on this engagement in the Dáil on 31 January 2018. I have not met with the Prime Minister formally since then, although we both attended the Informal EU Summit and High Level Conference on the Sahel in Brussels in February, the European Council in Brussels in March, and the EU-Western Balkans Summit in Sofia in May. I recently wrote to Mr Orban on the occasion of his re-election, and wished him well in his role as Prime Minister of Hungary.

I have not yet had an opportunity to speak with Prime Minister Conte of Italy, but I have written to congratulate him on his appointment and to wish him well in his new role. I look forward to meeting him at the European Council in Brussels later this month.

My bilateral engagement with EU and international counterparts is ongoing, and remains crucial in relation to Brexit and other important EU issues.

In this context, I look forward to meeting the new Prime Minister of Spain, Pedro Sanchez, in Madrid on Thursday 14 June.

I am also scheduled to meet with the President of the European Commission, Jean Claude Juncker, in Dublin on 21 June, and with the Austrian Chancellor, Sebastian Kurz, in Dublin on 9 July.

In addition to such scheduled bilateral meetings, I meet and speak regularly with my EU counterparts at formal and informal meetings of the European Council, where I use every opportunity to advance Ireland's interests. I will of course attend the next meeting of the European Council in Brussels on 28 and 29 June.

EU Meetings

123. Deputy Micheál Martin asked the Taoiseach if he has spoken to the UK Prime Minister, Mrs. May, recently in regard to the forthcoming June European Council meeting. [24565/18]

124. Deputy Micheál Martin asked the Taoiseach if he has spoken to the UK Prime Minister, Mrs. May, regarding Northern Ireland in May 2018. [24567/18]

The Taoiseach: I propose to take Questions Nos. 123 and 124 together.

I met with Prime Minister May on the margins of the EU-Western Balkans summit in Sofia, Bulgaria, on 17 May.

We discussed current developments in relation to Brexit and the ongoing efforts to assist the parties in Northern Ireland to re-establish the institutions of the Good Friday Agreement.

Prime Minister May told me that she expected to table a new proposal on the future customs relationship between the European Union and the UK shortly. This was published as a technical note on Thursday 7 June.

At my meeting with Prime Minister May I indicated that any move on customs that keeps the UK close to the EU is to be welcomed.

I indicated that we're willing to examine the UK proposal, but we need to see it presented as a formal written proposal in the Brexit negotiations process.

I also emphasised to the Prime Minister that upholding the commitment to avoid a hard border requires progress on more than just customs.

The agreed report from December makes clear that continued alignment on both single market and customs rules is necessary. In many ways, the regulatory issues are even more important than customs here.

More generally, I made clear to the Prime Minister that Ireland would continue to insist on a legally operable backstop being in the Withdrawal Agreement. This would be in line with the commitments made by the UK in December and repeated by the Prime Minister in her letter to Donald Tusk, President of the European Council, in March.

We now need to see concrete progress on the delivery of these commitments by the time of the June European Council.

I have been consistent in my message to both Prime Minister May and my fellow EU Heads of State and Government at the European Council that reintroduction of a border on the island

of Ireland is not acceptable under any circumstances.

The Commission will make a first assessment of the technical and legal feasibility of the UK proposals, and whether they provide a basis for negotiation. We look forward to its assessment and to discussing whether the proposals could be helpful in meeting the UK's repeated commitment to avoiding a hard border, and thereby making progress on the backstop on Ireland/Northern Ireland.

Based on the negotiations between the UK and the Commission Taskforce in the coming days and weeks, Mr Barnier will make an assessment of progress, for consideration by the European Council on 28 and 29 June.

Freedom of Information Requests

125. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach if his attention was drawn to freedom of information documents on the strategic communications unit being released on 25 May 2018. [24568/18]

The Taoiseach: I have no involvement in the processing of Freedom of Information requests. This is managed by the Civil Servants in my Department.

Programme for Government Implementation

126. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach the status of the implementation of A Programme for Partnership Government as it applies to his Department. [24581/18]

The Taoiseach: Government recently approved the annual report setting out progress on the Programme for Government. This sets out detailed progress since May 2017 on commitments being implemented across Government and will be published shortly and laid before the Oireachtas.

The report contains details of progress on commitments falling under the responsibility of the Department of the Taoiseach, mainly linked to Brexit preparations, the work of the Citizens' Assembly and continuing the process of Dáil Reform and Seanad Reform.

The Citizens' Assembly has considered each of the five topics and has published its recommendations to date on three of them. These are, the Eighth amendment, responding to the challenges and opportunities of an ageing population and making Ireland a leader in tackling climate change. Government has published an indicative timetable for a number of referendums on constitutional amendments to be held in 2018 and 2019. The first of these was a referendum on the Eighth amendment which was passed in May 2018. Referendums on blasphemy and "woman's life within the home" are next in line to be held.

The new collaborative model is operating effectively in the Oireachtas with the Business Committee managing the weekly Dáil business and the new Parliamentary Budget Office established to provide independent and impartial information, analysis and advice to the Oireachtas. The cross party group on Seanad Reform held its first meeting in May and the Taoiseach recently met with the chairpersons of Oireachtas Committees to discuss a wide range of issues relevant to their work.

The Department continues to support the Taoiseach to ensure the best possible outcomes for Ireland in relation to Brexit. Earlier this week, Government launched the Global Ireland 2025

which represents the most ambitious renewal and expansion of Ireland's international presence ever undertaken in terms of diplomacy, culture, business, overseas aid, tourism and trade. It will support efforts to grow and diversify export markets, inward investment and tourism, as Brexit becomes a reality.

Commencement of Legislation

127. Deputy Mattie McGrath asked the Taoiseach the sections and parts of all legislation brought forward by his Department in each of the past four years that have yet to be commenced. [25185/18]

The Taoiseach: There are no Acts, or parts of Acts under the Department of the Taoiseach awaiting commencement.

Departmental Budgets

128. Deputy Jonathan O'Brien asked the Taoiseach his Department's capital allocation in each of the years 2019 to 2023; and the areas to which funds will be allocated in each of those years. [25578/18]

The Taoiseach: My Department has no capital allocation for the years in question.

EU Data

129. Deputy Michael McGrath asked the Taoiseach the EU fines paid in each of the years 2015 to 2017, in tabular form. [25736/18]

The Taoiseach: No such fines have been imposed on my Department.

Defence Forces Remuneration

130. Deputy Thomas Byrne asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence his plans to remove the additional pay scales for privates that did not exist in the past and were introduced under the Haddington Road agreement. [24280/18]

Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach (Deputy Paul Kehoe): Defence Forces' pay is increasing in accordance with public sector pay agreements. The focus of these increase is weighted in favour of those on lower pay. Members of the Defence Forces have received the pay increases due under the Lansdowne Road Agreement.

In addition, following negotiations with PDFORRA on behalf of their members, improved pay scales for general service recruits and privates who joined the Permanent Defence Force post January 2013, were backdated to 1 July 2016 and paid in August 2017.

The Public Service Stability Agreement (PSSA) 2018-2020 provides for further increase in pay ranging from 6.2% to 7.4% over the lifetime of the Agreement, with the benefits once again weighted towards those on lower pay. The Agreement provides that an examination of remaining salary scale issues in respect of post January 2011 recruits at entry grades will be undertaken within 12 months of the commencement of the Agreement.

As the Deputy may be aware, the 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, my colleague the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, Pascal Donohoe, T.D. would prepare and lay before the Oireachtas a report on the cost of and a plan dealing with pay equalisation for new entrants to the public service. In accordance with the legislation, the Minister for Public Expenditure & Reform submitted the report to the Oireachtas on 16 March 2018.

The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform is the lead Department in this matter and has held discussions with public sector unions and representative associations. Further engagement will take place as the parties continue to work through the various aspects of this issue.

Defence Forces Pensions

131. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence his plans to change contract duration terms to six-year terms to coincide with the move from the old pension terms, that is, 21 year and 31 year to the 30 year pension cycle. [24281/18]

Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach (Deputy Paul Kehoe): In accordance with recommendations arising from an adjudication in 2015 under the Conciliation and Arbitration scheme for members of the Permanent Defence Force, my Department and military management, in consultation with PDFORRA, are currently reviewing the maximum service period of 21 years for enlisted personal up to the rank of corporal.

There are currently no plans to change contract duration terms to six years.

Defence Forces Remuneration

132. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence his plans to improve the duty money rate and the payment system to ensure persons are paid in seven working days. [24282/18]

Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach (Deputy Paul Kehoe): Defence Forces pay is increasing in accordance with public sector pay agreements. The Public Service Stability Agreement 2018-2020 provides for increases in pay ranging from 6.2% to 7.4% over the lifetime of the Agreement with the focus of the agreement on the lower paid. The restoration of cuts to allowances will also be considered in the context of the Agreement.

The process for the payment of Security Duty Allowances is that all approved claims are downloaded electronically from the Defence Forces Personnel Management System on the 10th of each month (or closest working day) and sent to the Department's Finance Branch from where they are immediately forwarded electronically to the Department's payroll provider – the National Shared Services Office - for payment in the next available payroll. (Payrolls are prepared in advance of each pay day). In May 2018, over 16,000 claims were processed from all units throughout the Defence Force for some 4,200 members of the Permanent Defence Force (PDF).

The above arrangements, which have been in place since April 2017, replaced a manual system of processing claims. The process is contained in a Defence Forces Administrative Instruction which sets out the responsibilities of all relevant appointment holders involved. While all financial processes are kept under regular review, there are no proposals under consideration to change the current arrangements.

Defence Forces Remuneration

133. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence his plans to increase aircraft technician tech pay to coincide with developments in aircraft technology. [24283/18]

Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach (Deputy Paul Kehoe): A review of technician pay in the Defence Forces is ongoing. There are no plans at this stage to increase aircraft technician pay.

In 2017, under my direction, the Department of Defence brought issues of recruitment and retention in the Defence Forces to the attention of the Public Sector Pay Commission (PSPC). As a direct result of that initiative the PSPC is now beginning an in-depth evidence based examination of those issues, which will include an examination of certain specialist positions and technician grades.

The Public Service Pay Commission has commenced this work and has requested hard data and detailed information from my Department. Defence management are preparing this material which will be sent to the Commission shortly.

The Public Service Pay Commission is due to complete this exercise in the second half of 2018. The findings and proposals arising will be considered at that time.

Defence Forces Remuneration

134. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence his plans to introduce changes for aircraft apprentices in both pay and rank to increase the attractiveness of the position. [24284/18]

Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach (Deputy Paul Kehoe): There were 22 Air Corps apprentices inducted into the Defence Forces in 2017. The most recent competition for apprentices was launched on 2nd March 2018 and ran until 25th May 2018. This competition yielded 931 applications for the 28 available positions. These applications are now being processed.

Rates of pay and conditions of employment within the Irish public service in general, have traditionally been set by, amongst other things, reference to levels of pay across the various sectors of the Irish public service. Defence Forces pay is increasing in accordance with public sector pay agreements. The focus of these increases is weighted in favour of those on lower pay. The Public Service Stability Agreement 2018-2020 provides for further increases in pay ranging from 6.2% to 7.4% over the lifetime of the Agreement with the focus of the agreement once again being on the lower paid. A 1% increase in annualised salaries due from 1 January 2018 has been paid to members of the Permanent Defence Force.

In 2017, under my direction, the Department of Defence raised recruitment and retention issues as part of the submission to the Public Service Pay Commission. The Government tasked the Public Service Pay Commission with examining these challenges in the Defence Sector in more detail. The Public Service Pay Commission has commenced this work and has requested detailed information from the Department of Defence. Defence management have forwarded some material and further material will be sent to the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in the coming weeks. The Public Service Pay Commission is due to complete this work in the second half of 2018. The findings and proposals arising will be considered at that time.

Questions - Written Answers
Defence Forces Remuneration

135. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence his plans to stop welfare deductions from soldiers' pay; and the services listed in DFR S3 from the Defence Forces budget in accordance with the Payment of Wages Act 1991. [24285/18]

Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach (Deputy Paul Kehoe): Paragraph 34 of Defence Force Regulation (DFR) S3 provides for a deduction of 24p (30c) a week from the pay of a soldier as a contribution towards meeting expenses relating to the provision of articles and services provided for the welfare, recreation and comfort of members such as administrative expenses in connection with arrangements made for personal laundry services and the provision of sports equipment and other such items.

This matter was the subject of a recent Labour Court appeal arising from a case taken to the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) by a member of the Defence Forces. The Labour Court determined that the appeal was not allowed and affirmed the original WRC decision that the deductions referred to were made under statute and were not in contravention of the Payment of Wages Act 1991.

Specifically, the Court found that welfare deductions from soldiers' pay came within the scope of section 5(1) of the Payment of Wages Act 1991, being deductions authorised by an instrument made under statute, namely Defence Force Regulation S3 paragraph 34, made under the Defence Act 1954.

The Court also found that the deduction was not made in respect of goods or services supplied to or provided for the employee by the employer the supply or provision of which was necessary to the employment. The Court further found that the deduction at issue in this case came within the scope of section 5(5)(c) of the Payment of Wages Act 1991.

The full decision of the Labour Court in this matter is available on their website (www.workplacerelations.ie), under reference number PWD1819.

The position concerning welfare reductions remains unchanged.

Defence Forces Contracts

136. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence his plans to apply the Organisation of Working Time Act 1997 allowing persons to have flexible working hours; and his further plans to introduce online learning to reduce the number of persons on courses or on overseas preparation that can then be available to support flexibility and reduce duties to 12 hour shifts. [24286/18]

Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The principles underlying the Working Time Directive are based on ensuring the health and safety of employees. The implications of the Working Time Directive and its implementation, in respect of the Defence Forces, have been the subject of an intensive and on-going review by my Department for some time. This is a complex matter having regard to the nature of the work of military forces, and the Working Time Directive recognises this complexity. There is also litigation pending in the High Court on the matter of the transposition of the Working Time Directive.

The Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection is progressing the legislation required to provide for the application of the Working Time Directive to the Defence Forces.

My Department has given full consideration to appropriate exemptions and derogations as provided for under the Directive. The Representative Associations have been invited to participate in a consultative process on the application of the Directive.

Separately, I am aware that the Defence Forces continue to review and adjust training and education approaches in order to maximise efficiency and, where possible, enhance work life balance for members of the Defence Forces.

Defence Forces Records

137. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence his plans to cease issuing the green book, the LA 89 and replace it with an electronic CV and presidential letter of commendation. [24287/18]

Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach (Deputy Paul Kehoe): Paragraph 51 of DFR A 10 (Enlistment, Promotions, Reductions, Transfers to the Reserve Defence Force and Discharge), refers to the ‘Character in Testimonial’ form - the LA 89 - and states that every individual about to be discharged from the Permanent Defence Force will be given such a form.

Form LA 89 consists of 3 components: - Basic personal identifier information such as number, rank, name, the ‘character in testimonial’ component and finally the signature, rank and stamp of the Officer Commanding. There are currently no plans to cease issuing the LA 89. Each former Defence Forces member is also entitled to seek a copy of their records under pre-existing freedom of information legislation.

I can assure the Deputy that the Government deeply appreciates and values the contribution of the many members of the Defence Forces.

Defence Forces Training

138. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence his plans to cease medical downgrading of persons of over 40 years of age (details supplied). [24288/18]

139. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence his plans to cease compulsory medical examination for persons of over 40 years of age (details supplied). [24289/18]

Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach (Deputy Paul Kehoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 138 and 139 together.

I can assure the Deputy that the health and safety of the men and women of the Defence Forces is a high priority for me. Given the robust nature of military life and the unique physical and psychological demands it places on individuals, it is necessary that the members of the Defence Forces are physically and mentally prepared to meet the challenges of all military operations. The State has a duty of care to ensure that each individual has the ability to perform the duties expected of them.

Defence Force Regulation A.12 Medical Treatment (Paragraph 75) provides that all members of the Permanent Defence Force shall undergo an annual medical examination. The Defence Forces have advised that some such examinations have occurred outside of the 12 month period but this has not been the case of any personnel over the age of 40 years. In addition, it is necessary to ensure that both new entrants and those deploying overseas are given priority

for medical examination. There is no difference in the examination that is carried out before and after attaining the age of 40 years. The outcome of a medical examination may lead to the medical re-classification of the individual concerned by a Medical Board.

There are no plans to change provisions to age related medical examinations and gradings.

Defence Forces Allowances

140. Deputy Róisín Shortall asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the reason for the delayed Air Corps members' duty and ration payment issuing on time for the past three months; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24476/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The process for the payment of Security Duty Allowances is that all approved claims are downloaded electronically from the Defence Forces Personnel Management System on the 10th of each month (or closest working day) in respect of the previous four weeks and sent to the Department's Finance Branch from where they are immediately forwarded electronically to the Department's payroll provider – the National Shared Services Office - for payment in the next available payroll. (Payrolls are prepared in advance). In May 2018, over 16,000 claims were processed from all units including the Air Corps for some 4,200 members of the Permanent Defence Force (PDF).

My Department has not been made aware of any recent late payments of duties that have been approved by the Air Corps but if the Deputy can forward any details I will have the matter examined further.

In relation to the late payment of ration refunds to personnel in the Air Corps, claims in respect of 97 personnel were submitted to my Department in February and March last which were due to be paid on 4th April. However, on examination of the claims a number of issues arose in relation to the entitlement of certain personnel to the refund and the verification of certain administrative details. These issues have now been addressed and 30 personnel who are entitled to a refund are due to be paid on 13th June 2018. Claims which were submitted in April and May have been processed and will also be paid on the 13th June 2018.

Programme for Government Implementation

141. Deputy Micheál Martin asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the status of the implementation of the Programme for a Partnership Government as it applies to his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24574/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The Programme for a Partnership Government (PfG) identified a total of 14 separate commitments that were assigned to my Department in 2016. Many of these overlap with White Paper on Defence implementation projects and their importance is reflected in the various Objectives and Actions that are set out in the Strategy Statement of the Department of Defence and the Defence Forces 2017-2020.

Two of the PfG commitments, the award of a 1916 medal to all members of the Defence Forces who served in 2016 and the introduction of a pilot employment support scheme, have been implemented in full.

In relation to the remaining commitments, progress continues to be made across all fronts. These include ongoing implementation of the White Paper on Defence, efforts to increase serv-

ing strength levels within the Defence Forces including increased female participation, supports for veterans, while plans have been developed to guide a wide range of equipment and infrastructure investment priorities including those identified in the PfG. In relation to the latter, a maintenance and upgrade programme for the armoured personnel carrier fleet is well underway, a contract has been placed for the acquisition of three new PC12 aircraft which will replace the current Cessna fleet, while a new Offshore Patrol Vessel is scheduled for delivery later this year. A range of other equipment priorities are also being progressed and, in addition, some €35m worth of infrastructure projects are at various stages of implementation. In relation to Civil Defence, the commitment to establish an inter-agency guidance team has been met and this is now up and running.

I am satisfied that good progress continues to be made across the range of PfG commitments assigned and that these will continue to be a priority for my Department.

Defence Forces Veterans Associations Funding

142. Deputy Mary Lou McDonald asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the consideration that has been given to making an annual financial contribution towards military veterans' organisations such as an organisation (details supplied) that provides help and support to former soldiers. [24706/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): I recognise the valued public service given by former servicemen and women of the Defence Forces to the State. As such, officials from my Department hold regular meetings with recognised veterans' organisations, including the Irish United Nations Veterans Association (IUNVA), at which issues of concern to their members are discussed. IUNVA has enjoyed the long standing official recognition of the Department of Defence and the Defence Forces. As part of that process the Department has a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with IUNVA.

Under the terms of the Service Level Agreement, and as part of the supports currently offered to veterans, my Department provides financial support by way of an annual subvention to IUNVA, to support and encourage its work. This subvention is currently €11,000 per annum. This funding provided to IUNVA by the Department of Defence is to support the general overheads of the organisation.

Defence Forces Remuneration

143. Deputy Mary Lou McDonald asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the starting salary and relevant expenses and conditions for serving soldiers; and the way in which it compares to living wage standards. [24707/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): Rates of pay and conditions of employment in the Defence Forces have traditionally been set by reference to, *inter alia*, relative levels of pay across the various sectors of the Irish public service. Defence Forces pay is increasing in line with recent public sector pay agreements. The focus of these increases is weighted in favour of those on lower pay.

Members of the Defence Forces received increases in pay in 2017 under the Lansdowne Road Agreement. In addition, in a deal agreed with PDFORRA, improved pay scales for general service recruits and privates who joined the Permanent Defence Force post 1 January 2013, were backdated to 1 July 2016 and paid in August 2017.

The Public Service Stability Agreement 2018-2020 provides for further increases in pay ranging from 6.2% to 7.4% over the lifetime of the Agreement with the focus of the agreement once again being on the lower paid. By the end of the agreement the payscales for all public servants (including members of the Permanent Defence Force) earning up to €70,000, will be restored to pre-FEMPI levels. The restoration of cuts to allowances will also be considered in the context of the Agreement. An increase of 1% on annualised salaries due from 1 January 2018 has been paid to members of the Permanent Defence Force.

Following the series of pay increases in the last 12 months, a three star private on completion of training starts on €27,257 (inclusive of military service allowance). This represents an increase of 25% on the starting payscale of this rank in the last 12 months. This starting pay compares very favourably with other entry level pay rates across the public service. In addition to basic pay and military service allowance, a range of duties attract additional allowances.

A newly commissioned officer starts on a salary in excess of €35,000 per annum (inclusive of military service allowance), following 15 months training. If officers are already graduates they start on a salary in excess of €40,000 per annum (inclusive of military service allowance). These rates of pay compare favourably with the average graduate salary across all sectors.

There is an ongoing programme of HR development within the Defence Organisation. A number of initiatives have been instigated, including a review of the Conciliation and Arbitration scheme for members of the Permanent Defence Force; a review of the criteria governing contracts for enlisted personnel and a review of skills gaps across the Defence Forces. These measures address a range of issues and are aimed at ensuring that the Defence Forces retain the capabilities to undertake the roles assigned by Government.

Defence Forces Veterans

144. Deputy Mary Lou McDonald asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the provision made for former soldiers who find themselves homeless after leaving the Army. [24708/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): At the outset, let me state that housing and homelessness remains the Government's number one priority. The issue of housing and homelessness is a matter in the first instance for the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government. My Department does not have a housing budget and does not provide homes or accommodation for retired personnel.

My Department recognises the valued public service given by former servicemen and women of the Defence Forces to the State. As such, officials from my Department hold regular meetings with recognised veterans' organisations including the Organisation of National Ex-Service Personnel (O.N.E.), at which issues of concern to their members are discussed. O.N.E. has enjoyed the long standing official recognition of the Department of Defence and the Defence Forces. As part of that process the Department has a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with O.N.E.

O.N.E. is dedicated to looking after the welfare of ex-service personnel of the Irish Defence Forces by way of providing accommodation to homeless, elderly or disabled members in need of such domestic accommodation and shelter and other assistance that may be required. O.N.E. is a limited company with charitable status and has accommodation in Smithfield, Dublin (Brú na bhFiann with 30 places), Athlone (7 places), Letterkenny (7 places) a drop-in centre in Limerick, and an advice centre in Dundalk.

Any retired soldier, male or female, may contact the Smithfield centre directly and O.N.E.

will assist by directing the person to other facilities within the Health Services, the local authority services, or offer a room if vacant, in Dublin, Athlone or Letterkenny.

I am aware that O.N.E. is proposing to increase the number of advice centres in other locations such as Cathal Brugha Barracks, McKee Barracks, Custume Barracks, Finner Camp, Dún Uí Mhaoliosa Barracks and Stephens Barracks. My Department is currently working with O.N.E. in this regard.

As a charitable organisation, I am aware that O.N.E. is heavily dependent on fundraising to finance its operation. In this regard, under the terms of the SLA, and as part of the supports currently offered to veterans, my Department provides financial support by way of an annual subvention to O.N.E. to support and encourage its work. This subvention is currently €44,000 per annum. The funding provided to O.N.E. by the Department of Defence is to support the general overheads of the organisation. It is not for the provision of services that are provided to citizens, including members of O.N.E., from other arms of the State such as housing, health, social assistance, etc. Dublin City Council continues to support, on an ongoing basis, the O.N.E. homeless initiative in Smithfield.

I have also committed to meeting the recognised veterans associations, including O.N.E., on an annual basis and I provide support by attendance at specific events whenever I can. Later this month on the 27th June, I will be attending the launch of O.N.E.'s annual Fuchsia fundraising appeal. I am advised that Defence Forces units and installations throughout the country undertake fundraising in support of the work of O.N.E. on behalf of veterans. The military authorities encourage such fundraising as an illustration of the solidarity and bonds that exists between veterans and serving personnel.

The Defence Organisation and I are committed to continued engagement with O.N.E. into the future.

Commencement of Legislation

145. Deputy Mattie McGrath asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the sections and parts of all legislation brought forward by his Department in each of the past four years that have yet to be commenced; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25175/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): There have been no sections or parts of legislation brought forward by my Department in the past 4 years that have yet to be commenced.

Departmental Funding

146. Deputy Jonathan O'Brien asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence his Department's capital allocation in each of the years 2019 to 2023; and the areas to which funds will be allocated in each of those years. [25568/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The National Development Plan (NDP) sets out Departmental Capital Allocations for the period 2018–2022. Capital allocations for 2023 were not included in the National Development Plan. A total of €541 million has been allocated to the Defence Vote for the years 2018-2022, as follows:

Defence Capital Allocations 2018-2022

Year	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Total
€Million	77	106	113	120	125	541

This level of capital funding will allow the Defence Organisation to undertake a programme of sustained equipment replacement and infrastructural development across the Army, Air Corps and Naval Service as identified and prioritised in the Defence White Paper and ensure that the Defence Forces have the capabilities necessary to deliver on all the roles assigned by Government.

The following priority investment programmes and projects have been identified for inclusion under the Capital Allocation in the National Development Plan:

- Equipment renewal and replacement programmes including mid-life upgrade of the Army Mowag APC armoured fleet along with investment in further force protection, transport, communications and information technology, weapons and ammunition systems;
- Procurement of Light Tactical Armoured Vehicles;
- Replacement of the Air Corps Cessna Aircraft;
- CASA Maritime Patrol Aircraft Replacement Programme;
- On-going Naval vessel replacement programme, including acquisition of a multi-role vessel;
- Mid-life refit of the Naval Service vessels LÉ Niamh and LÉ Roisín;
- Virtual Desktop Architecture (VDA) project for Defence Forces;
- On-going investment in the modernisation and renewal of barrack infrastructure including accommodation, catering, workshops, storage and training facilities.

In addition, during the lifetime of the National Development Plan, other equipment replacement and infrastructural development projects will be advanced across the Army, Air Corps and Naval Service as well as Civil Defence projects. These projects will be implemented on the basis of identified requirements and priorities, as set out in the White Paper.

The capital funding provided under the National Development Plan emphasises the importance attached by the Government to ensuring that the Defence Forces have the capabilities necessary to deliver on all the roles assigned by Government.

Naval Service Vessels

147. Deputy Thomas P. Broughan asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence when the new Naval Service ship LÉ George Bernard Shaw will arrive into the fleet; the estimated cost of same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25598/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): My priority as Minister with Responsibility for Defence is to ensure that the operational capability of the Defence Forces is maintained to the greatest extent possible so as to enable the Army, Air Corps and Naval Service to carry out their roles as assigned by Government.

The most significant investment of recent years by the Defence Organisation has been on the procurement of the new Off-Shore Patrol Vessels for the Naval Service. This programme

has seen the delivery of three new naval Service vessels since 2014. The LÉ Samuel Beckett was commissioned in May 2014, LÉ James Joyce was commissioned in September 2015 and LÉ William Butler Yeats was commissioned into service in October 2016.

In June 2016, a contract for an additional sister ship was agreed at a cost of €54.3m, bringing investment in the new ships programme to some €250 million since 2010. The build of the fourth ship, to be named LÉ George Bernard Shaw, is progressing well at Babcock Marine Appledore in the UK. The ship is scheduled to undergo Sea Acceptance Trials (SAT) in mid July 2018, and the delivery date of the ship will be confirmed on the successful completion of the SAT.

The White Paper on Defence provides for the replacement of the current Naval Service flagship LÉ Eithne with a multi role vessel (MRV). It is the Government's intent that this new vessel will provide a flexible and adaptive capability for a wide range of maritime tasks, both at home and overseas. Planning has commenced on this project and it is intended to hold a public tender competition in due course for the supply of the MRV. This, of course, is subject to the availability of funding within the overall Defence capital funding envelope. The cost of the MRV will only be known once the tender competition is concluded.

The acquisition of these modern new vessels, combined with an ongoing maintenance regime for all vessels within the fleet, will ensure that the operational capabilities of the Naval Service, as the State's principal seagoing agency, are maintained to the greatest extent.

EU Data

148. Deputy Michael McGrath asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the EU fines paid in each of the years 2015 to 2017, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25730/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): No EU fines were paid by my Department for the years 2015 to 2017.

Middle East Issues

149. Deputy Micheál Martin asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if recent developments and loss of life on the Israel and Palestine border will be discussed at the June 2018 European Council meeting. [24564/18]

150. Deputy Micheál Martin asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will be requesting for the Israel-Palestine issue to be placed on the agenda of the June 2018 European Council meeting. [25652/18]

155. Deputy Niall Collins asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will report on the recent EU Foreign Affairs Council meeting in particular discussions on the Middle East conflict; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24342/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): I propose to take Questions Nos. 149, 150 and 155 together.

In view of the violent events in Gaza leading up to and culminating on 14 May, I requested that these tragic and destabilising events should be added to the agenda of the Foreign Affairs Council on 28 May. Accordingly, it was discussed by Ministers in informal format over lunch.

Many Ministers expressed their deep concern at the disproportionate use of force by Israel, and the appalling number of casualties. These concerns had already been expressed in EU and national statements, and at the UN Human Rights Council, where Ireland and others supported a successful resolution which will, *inter alia*, establish a commission of inquiry into these events.

In my intervention I also argued strongly that events such as these will only recur if the vicious cycle in Gaza is not broken. It was essential not to despair of progress in Gaza but instead to redouble our efforts to find practical ways to begin to ease the situation there, and to provide hope. The inhabitants of Gaza must be able to see a political and economic perspective to end the blockade and end their isolation, otherwise more militant voices and groups will inevitably be strengthened.

The meeting also discussed humanitarian assistance, the difficult position of UNRWA, the recent move of the United States Embassy, and the prospects for a peace initiative by the US.

Brexit Issues

151. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the status of the €3.5 million allocated to Article 50 negotiations as outlined in budget 2018; the amount of the €3.5 million allocation that has been spent; the way in which the funds have been spent; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24320/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): Brexit has been prioritised across the entire range of work of my Department. Additional staff have been assigned to the key Divisions with responsibility for Brexit matters, namely the European Union Division and the Ireland, UK and Americas Division (IUKA), to cover the issues arising from the UK exit process. The work of those staff is primarily targeted at the management of the negotiations on UK withdrawal and subsequent agreements; enhanced Brexit co-ordination, promotion and public engagement on the Future of Europe.

There has been a marked increase also in demand for passports and citizenship via foreign birth registration from applicants in Northern Ireland and in Britain and this has had an impact on the Passport Service and on Consular Division.

Many business units across my Department at headquarters in Dublin are involved in the response to the UK exit, including the Legal Division, the Trade Division and the Policy Planning Unit. The additional resources will contribute to developing targeted responses in new and mature markets to mitigate the economic impact of British withdrawal. Overseas, additional posts have been assigned to our Embassies in London, Berlin, and Paris as well as the Permanent Representation of Ireland to the European Union in Brussels with a focus on trade and economic promotion and further enhancement of key strategic relationships and partnerships.

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

The additional Brexit-related expenditure is in line with profile and it is expected that the additional allocation will be fully spent by year end.

Diplomatic Representation

152. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade

the status of the €2 million allocated to deepening Ireland's global footprint as outlined in budget 2018; the amount of the €2 million allocation that has been spent; the way in which the funds have been spent; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24321/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): Up to €2 million was allocated in Budget 2018 to cover initial expenditure by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade on the Doubling of the Global Footprint Initiative. Work has begun on the initial phase of the expansion of Ireland's Diplomatic Network which includes the Government decision to open new Embassies in Santiago, Chile; Bogotá, Colombia; Amman, Jordan; and Wellington, New Zealand; and new Consulates General in Vancouver, Canada and Mumbai, India.

A project team has been assembled to manage the expansion and extensive planning is currently underway to ensure the initiative makes the most efficient use of the Department's Human and Financial resources.

Based on the current timelines envisaged, we expect the majority of allocated expenditure for 2018 to be incurred in the latter half of the year when the first of the new offices will open.

Passport Services

153. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the status of the €1.5 million allocated to passport service and consular operational costs as outlined in budget 2018; the amount of the €1.5 million allocation that has been spent; the way in which the funds have been spent; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24322/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The expenditure of the additional allocation to the Passport Service is in line with profile and is expected to be fully expended by the year end.

There has been a strong increase in demand for passports due to a variety of factors including a general increase in the number of Irish residents travelling abroad, a growing population, as well as a significant rise in application numbers from Northern Ireland and Great Britain. Total demand in the first four months of the year was up 8% on last year.

The continuous implementation of service improvements has been central to my Department's response to increasing application volumes. The Passport Reform Programme is delivering major upgrades to the passport service technology platforms and business processes as well as significant customer service improvements.

The Passport Service received sanction this year for 220 Temporary Clerical Officers (TCOs) for appointment to the Passport Offices in Dublin and Cork. All TCOs in this intake have been fully trained and placed since March. These TCOs are working together with permanent staff to process passport applications and to deal with the high number of enquiries being made through the Passport Service's various customer service channels.

The number of Full Time Equivalent staff permanently employed by my Department and assigned to the Passport Service stood at 322 at the beginning of 2018, an increase of 12 compared to 2017. In addition, over 30 additional permanent staff have been assigned to the Passport Service since the beginning of 2018.

Questions - Written Answers
Overseas Development Aid Expenditure

154. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the status of the €13 million allocated to overseas development assistance as outlined in budget 2018; the amount of the €13 million allocation that has been spent; the way in which the funds have been spent; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24323/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Ciarán Cannon): The Government is strongly committed to Ireland's overseas aid programme, and to its place at the heart of our foreign policy. Our priorities are clearly laid out in the Government's development policy, 'One World One Future'. In line with our commitment to the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, our aid programme is sharply focused on delivering our goals of reducing poverty and hunger, promoting inclusive and sustainable growth and building more equitable and better systems of governance.

For budget 2018, the Government announced a total allocation of €707 million to Official Development Assistance (ODA). Just over €500 million is being managed by my Department through Vote 27 International Cooperation, publically known as Irish Aid. This represents an increase of over €13 million on the 2017 Vote allocation. A further €207 million is being managed through other Government Departments and through Ireland's share of the EU Development Cooperation budget.

As an integral component of the overall financial management and control of the aid programme, Irish Aid operates a comprehensive budgeting system. Clear criteria are in place to inform the budget allocation process. Following a period of extensive discussion and analysis a detailed budget allocation for the 2018 programme was approved by an inter-Departmental committee, enabling Ireland to respond to existing needs, ongoing humanitarian crises and overall priorities as defined in the 'One World, One Future' document.

Sub-Saharan Africa remains our priority region, where we direct assistance to the poorest communities, particularly but not exclusively in Ethiopia, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Malawi, Mozambique, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Ireland also engages in Vietnam and neighbouring countries. In addition to development assistance, Ireland leads in humanitarian response, including to the ongoing Syria crisis and also to the situation in the Horn of Africa, particularly Somalia, South Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, as well as to emergencies as they arise.

Our programme is delivered through a wide range of partners and channels, including partner government systems, Irish and international Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and missionary organisations, the EU, and the UN and other multilateral agencies and organisations. We continue to engage with UN and multilateral agencies whose core mission and objectives are closely aligned to Ireland's aid priorities, allowing us to work with and support vulnerable communities across most developing countries.

As at the end of May 2018, my Department has disbursed almost €150 million of the 2018 allocated funding to a wide variety of partners and programme areas in line with robust and prudent grant management procedures. I am confident of a full disbursement by the year end as we deliver on our commitment in the fight against poverty and hunger, continue to bring real and sustainable improvements some of the world's poorest communities and increase our response to the unprecedented level of humanitarian needs worldwide.

Question No. 155 answered with Question No. 149.

Passport Data

156. Deputy Niall Collins asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the number of passports issued in each of the years 2014 to 2017 and to date in 2018; the number of passport applicants from Great Britain and Northern Ireland in the same years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24343/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The numbers of passports issued in each of the years requested are as follows:

Year	Passports issued
2014	632,156
2015	672,760
2016	733,060
2017	781,375
2018 (January 1st – May 31st)	376,746

The numbers of passport applications received from Northern Ireland and Great Britain for the period requested are as follows:

Year	Passport applications from Great Britain	Passport applications from Northern Ireland
2014	43,449	48,475
2015	46,229	53,715
2016	63,453	67,582
2017	80,752	82,274
2018 (January 1st – May 31st)	44,962	46,898

Passport Services

157. Deputy Niall Collins asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the target time for issuing passports across all services; the actual time for issuing passports across services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24344/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The turnaround timeframe for a passport application will depend, in the first instance, on the channel through which the application was submitted. The Passport Service provides a range of channels to Irish citizens wishing to apply for a passport. These include a postal application system, online passport application service, in person counter application facilities in Dublin and Cork and the network of Irish Missions worldwide. The table below shows target and actual turnaround times for all of the Passport Services application channel.

Type of Passport Application	Target Turnaround Times	Actual turnaround Times
Online Passport Application	10 working days	10 working days with 50% processed in 5 working days
An Post Passport Express Renewal Applications	15 working days	15 working days

Type of Passport Application	Target Turnaround Times	Actual turnaround Times
An Post Passport Express First Time Application, and Lost/Stolen/Damaged Replacements	20 working days	35+ working days
Northern Ireland and Great Britain Passport Express Renewal Applications	15 working days	17 working days
Northern Ireland and Great Britain Passport Express First Time Applicants and Lost/Stolen/Damaged Replacements	20 working days	35+ working days
Missions	30 working days	24 working days
Great Britain Renewals	20 working days	21 working days
Great Britain First time applicants/renewals with lost/stolen passports	30 working days	44 working days

Turnaround targets are determined on the basis of available resources and projected demand. Turnaround times are among a number of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) by which the Passport Service measures its success in delivering a modern and responsive public service.

Measures taken by the Passport Service to minimise the impact of peak time application volumes on turnaround times for all categories of applications include the recruitment of additional staff and the use of targeted overtime for all Passport Offices.

The Passport Service received sanction this year for 220 Temporary Clerical Officers (TCOs) for appointment to the Passport Offices in Dublin and Cork. All TCOs in this intake have been fully trained and placed since March. These TCOs are working together with permanent staff to process passport applications and to deal with the high number of enquiries being made through the Passport Service's various customer service channels.

Foreign Policy

158. Deputy Niall Collins asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the status of the political situation in Italy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24345/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): Following the elections held in March, consultations led by President Mattarella led at the end of May to agreement by the *Lega* (League) and *Movimento Cinque Stelle* (the Five Star Movement) to form a coalition government. Mr Giuseppe Conte was sworn in as Prime Minister on 1 June and last week both houses of the Italian Parliament voted confidence in the new Government, giving it its official mandate.

Italy and Ireland are fortunate in having excellent bilateral relations and I look forward to these continuing. I hope to meet my new Italian colleague, Foreign Minister Enzo Moavero Milanesi, in the very near future.

Syrian Conflict

159. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the steps he will take to ensure that aid is properly managed in Syria and reaches those most in need in view of the fact that Ireland will lead the international donor group which supports the work of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24352/18]

161. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the safeguards in place to ensure that aid from Ireland to Syria is properly used and is going to its intended targets; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24354/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Ciarán Cannon): I propose to take Questions Nos. 159 and 161 together.

Ireland's humanitarian response inside Syria is targeted at those in greatest need, channelled in line with the humanitarian principles of independence, impartiality, neutrality and humanity.

Decisions on the allocation of Irish funds are based on analyses of the highest priority needs, together with assessments of which organisations are best placed and have the appropriate capacity to respond to those needs. Given the complexity of operation in a conflict zone, Ireland's assistance inside Syria is channelled through the UN and the International Committee of the Red Cross and Red Crescent. It is recognised that provision of humanitarian aid to areas in conflict, including Syria, presents significant challenges, particularly when it comes to the political and security environment. Ireland's partners working in such environments are therefore subject to careful systems assessments and must demonstrate transparency, accountability, and effective and efficient use of funds.

In addition to the standard robust grant management and appraisals processes, a dedicated Humanitarian Advisor for the Middle East, based in the Irish Embassy in Ankara, also oversees programmes and partners in receipt of Irish funding. This includes membership of donor advisory boards, based in the region, who oversee the allocation of support to various partners. In addition, Ireland participates in international donor coordination mechanisms that monitor and oversee the work of our partners. Through Ireland's upcoming chairmanship of the OCHA Donor Support Group, in particular, we will support OCHA to lead an effective and principled global humanitarian response, including inside Syria.

Through our annual contributions to EU Institutions, Ireland also supports the EU's humanitarian response inside Syria. Implementation of humanitarian aid managed by the EU is ensured through several layers of checks and monitoring, including regular field visits. Regular evaluations are also undertaken, the results of which are publicly available.

Ireland will continue to monitor closely the humanitarian situation across the region affected by the Syria crisis. We will also continue to ensure that Irish and EU assistance reaches those in greatest need in the most efficient and effective way possible, with robust monitoring mechanisms in place to ensure this.

Syrian Conflict

160. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the steps he is taking to ensure that sanctions against Syria are fully enforced and not bypassed by the Assad regime; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24353/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The brutal repression of dissent by the Assad regime has led to a conflict that over the past seven years has cost the lives of over 400,000 people, has left over 13 million people in need of humanitarian assistance and has caused the largest displacement of people since World War Two. The Assad regime and its allies have repeatedly targeted civilians, including through use of “starve or surrender” techniques, forced displacement in the interest of demographic engineering, denial of humanitarian assistance and deliberate attacks on civilian infrastructure such as schools, markets and hospitals, including chemical attacks.

Ireland supports EU restrictive measures (sanctions) targeting the Assad regime and its supporters, and will continue to do so as long as repression continues. The sanctions currently in place include notably an oil embargo, restrictions on certain investments, a freeze of the assets of the Syrian central bank within the EU, export restrictions on equipment and technology that might be used for internal repression as well as on equipment and technology for monitoring or interception of internet or telephone communications. In addition, over 250 persons and almost 70 entities are targeted by a travel ban and an asset freeze over the violent repression against the civilian population in Syria. Most recently, in March, the Council added an additional 4 persons to the list of those targeted by EU restrictive measures against the Syrian regime for their role in the development and use of chemical weapons against the civilian population. On 28 May 2018, the Council extended EU restrictive measures against the Syrian regime until 1 June 2019. Given the ongoing repression of the civilian population, the EU decided to maintain its restrictive measures against the Syrian regime and its supporters, in line with the EU strategy on Syria.

EU Regulations have what is termed “direct effect” in Irish law, meaning that they apply and must be complied with in the same way as Irish legislation. In Ireland, penalties for breaches of sanctions are provided for by Statutory Instrument (SIs). A comprehensive list of SIs may be found in the Irish Statute Book. Within the EU each Member State is required to designate Competent Authorities that are engaged with sanctions issues including ensuring that sanctions measures are implemented. In Ireland’s case, there are three such Competent Authorities: the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation, and the Central Bank of Ireland.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade represents Ireland internationally on sanctions-related matters, including communicating with the EU, the UN and other states in respect of international restrictive measures. The Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation is the Competent Authority for implementation of trade-related sanctions and the Central Bank of Ireland is the Competent Authority for the implementation of financial sanctions as they relate to financial institutions. Given the multi-sectoral nature of sanctions measures however a wide range of Government stakeholders are engaged on sanctions related issues.

Ireland will continue to support all efforts to ensure a lasting peace and full accountability for war crimes in Syria, in the context of bringing peace and stability to the region.

Question No. 161 answered with Question No. 159.

Syrian Conflict

162. Deputy Niall Collins asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the steps being taken at national, EU and international level to ensure that the perpetrators of war crimes in Syria are brought to justice; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24355/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The situation in Syria remains of grave concern. The conflict has cost the lives of well over 400,000 people, 13 million Syrians are in need of humanitarian assistance, over 6 million people are displaced within Syria and an additional 5 million have fled to neighbouring countries and the wider region. There have been numerous brutal attacks on civilians by the Assad regime and others, including the use of medieval starve or surrender tactics, the use of chemical weapons and the deliberate targeting of medical facilities and personnel.

Ireland supports a broad range of efforts to ensure full legal accountability for all war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Syria as part of a sustainable peaceful resolution to the conflict and has consistently called for the situation in Syria to be referred to the International Criminal Court. Ireland supports the work of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry established in August 2011 by the Human Rights Council to investigate all alleged violations of international human rights law since March 2011 in Syria. Furthermore, in December 2016 Ireland and a group of like-minded countries successfully pressed for the adoption of a resolution by the UN General Assembly to establish an International Impartial and Independent Mechanism to assist in the investigation and prosecution of persons responsible for the most serious crimes under international law committed in Syria. Last year my predecessor as Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Charlie Flanagan T.D. announced a contribution of €100,000 to support the work of this mechanism. Further support for the work of the Mechanism in 2018 is currently under consideration.

Ireland is also a strong and consistent supporter of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) whose Fact Finding Mission (FFM) was set up in 2014 to “establish facts surrounding allegations of the use of toxic chemicals, reportedly chlorine, for hostile purposes in the Syrian Arab Republic”. We support their work financially with annual contributions amounting to nearly €1million since 2014. In addition, Ireland contributed €200,000 specifically to the OPCW-UN Joint Investigative Mission to eliminate chemical weapons in Syria.

Ireland deeply regrets Russia’s veto of the renewal of the mandate of this Joint Investigative Mission last October. It is extremely frustrating that the UN Security Council has not been able to take meaningful action to maintain peace and security in Syria and to ensure accountability for war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Syria. Those who have vetoed effective UN action in this regard bear a heavy responsibility.

Ireland is supporting an initiative to convene a Special Conference of States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention with a view to considering the introduction of a mechanism for attributing responsibility for the use of chemical weapons.

Ireland also supports EU sanctions targeting the regime and its supporters, and will continue to do so as long as repression continues. The sanctions currently in place include notably an oil embargo, restrictions on certain investments, a freeze of the assets of the Syrian central bank within the EU, export restrictions on equipment and technology that might be used for internal repression as well as on equipment and technology for monitoring or interception of internet or telephone communications. In addition, over 250 persons and almost 70 entities are targeted by a travel ban and an asset freeze over the violent repression against the civilian population in Syria. Most recently, in March, the Council added an additional 4 persons to the list of those targeted by EU restrictive measures against the Syrian regime for their role in the development and use of chemical weapons against the civilian population. On 28 May 2018, the Council extended EU restrictive measures against the Syrian regime until 1 June 2019. Given the ongoing repression of the civilian population, the EU decided to maintain its restrictive measures against the Syrian regime and its supporters, in line with the EU strategy on Syria.

Ireland has also supported calls for sanctions at UN level also and very much regrets that a draft UN Security Council resolution that would have established a sanctions regime, a committee and an expert panel to hold accountable those using and producing chemical weapons in Syria was not passed in February 2017. Ireland will continue to support all efforts to ensure a lasting peace and full accountability for war crimes in Syria, in the context of bringing peace and stability to the region.

Passport Applications Data

163. Deputy Gerry Adams asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the number of new applications and renewal applications for Irish passports that have come from Northern Ireland since 1 January 2018; and the number of these applications that are being processed in the system. [24490/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): Between 1 January and 31 May 2018, the Passport Service received over 46,000 passport applications from applicants resident in Northern Ireland. Of these, over 19,000 were first time applicants and over 26,000 were applying to renew existing passports.

Between 1 January and 31 May 2018, over 35,000 passports were issued to applicants resident in Northern Ireland.

Passport Services

164. Deputy Gerry Adams asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade his views on the system through which elected representatives can communicate with the Passport Office; and his plans to review this system to better improve it. [24491/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Passport Service currently has a dedicated channel of communication for Oireachtas representatives. To ensure resources are used effectively many of my Department's functions, including communication channels, are centralised and accordingly, my office is the dedicated point of contact for public representatives. This ensures consistency, efficiency and fairness in responses to the queries of all public representatives. Any passport-related queries raised through this channel are dealt with without delay.

I am grateful to Deputies for their continued assistance in advising constituents to submit their application in good time before their planned travel date, to consult the Passport Service's webpage on my Department's website before applying and to sign up for our passport renewal reminder service.

Passport Services

165. Deputy Gerry Adams asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the consideration he is giving to the need for a new and dedicated passport service located in Northern Ireland. [24492/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Passport Service offers a range of convenient channels for submission of passport applications by Irish citizens and I am satisfied that the options available meet the current needs of passport

applicants without the need for the establishment of a further passport office.

An online passport application service was launched in March 2017 and offers the convenience of an online application system 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for Irish citizens anywhere in the world, without the need for application forms, printed photos or witnesses. At present, the online passport application service accommodates adult passport renewal applications and passport card applications. It is planned to extend the online application facility to other categories of renewal by the end of 2018.

People who cannot or do not wish to apply online have the option of applying through their local post office. The vast majority of applications received by the Passport Service from applicants residing in the island of Ireland are submitted through Passport Express and Northern Ireland Passport Express. Northern Ireland Passport Express allows applicants living in Northern Ireland to apply for their passport through more than 70 post offices.

Bearing in mind the availability of both the online and postal application channels, very few citizens living in the island of Ireland are required to travel a significant distance in order to apply for their passport. In the relatively small number of cases where citizens need to travel very urgently and do not have a valid passport, the Passport Offices in Dublin and Cork offer an appointment service.

Advice and guidance on the above channels and other useful information on passports is available on the Department's website at www.dfa.ie/passport.

Passport Applications Administration

166. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the correct procedure to be followed by a person (details supplied) whose passport expires in July 2018 but who reaches 18 years of age in November 2018; if an adult passport is the correct passport to be applied for in this instance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24534/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): All passport applications are subject to the provisions of the Passports Act 2008 (“the Act”) which sets, among other things, special requirements for the issuing of a passport to a minor. The Passport Service is bound by Irish law, and under no circumstances may it deviate from these statutory requirements. Therefore, an applicant may not apply for an adult passport until they have reached 18 years of age.

In this particular instance, if the person in question intends to travel before they have reached 18 years of age they must renew their passport as a minor. Passports issued to a minor are valid until the date of expiry listed on the document, regardless of whether the passport holder is at that time an adult or a minor. When they seek to renew their passport again in 5 years' time upon expiry of that document, they may then apply for an adult passport.

Programme for Government Implementation

167. Deputy Micheál Martin asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the status of the implementation of A Programme for a Partnership Government as it applies to his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24576/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): A Pro-

gramme for a Partnership Government sets out the key Government commitments which will enable us to articulate ourselves on the world stage, contribute to peace-building initiatives across the globe, and share our culture and values. My Department has primary responsibility for twenty-nine actions, particularly in the *Ireland and the World* chapter. These commitments, alongside our Brexit response and our broad foreign policy priorities, are reflected in the Department's latest Statement of Strategy 2017-2020 and in business planning for the Department and its Mission network.

The Department's reports on its progress in implementing commitments are integrated into Annual and Progress Reports on the Programme for Government published by the Department of An Taoiseach. The Government recently approved its second Programme for a Partnership Government annual report which provides a comprehensive update on progress since May 2017. The report will be laid before the Oireachtas in the near future.

Since the launch of the Programme for a Partnership Government, work has been taken forward across all actions assigned to this Department, with a particular focus on a whole of Government response to Brexit, the wide range of issues relating to Northern Ireland, delivery of an innovative Passport Service to citizens, the development of holistic relationships with Asia and the Americas, progressing Ireland's engagement with the Sustainable Development Goals, and ensuring the delivery of an effective and accountable aid programme and humanitarian response. Ireland's commitment to a rules based international system and conflict resolution and peacebuilding also remains a bedrock of our work programme.

Middle East Peace Process

168. Deputy Niall Collins asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade his views on Israel's rejection of the UN and EU calls for an independent inquiry into the recent atrocities in Gaza; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24674/18]

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.

Middle East Peace Process

169. Deputy Niall Collins asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if

he has formally made known his views to the US Administration on the decision to relocate its embassy to Jerusalem; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24675/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Government's view of the move of the United States Embassy to Jerusalem was expressed in my statement of 6 December when the decision was announced. I stated that the decision was premature and ill-advised, and would be unhelpful to efforts to reach a resolution of the Middle East Peace Process, something which is very urgently needed. Indeed prior to this announcement, I had conveyed to the US Government my concern about reports of their intentions. Very many other governments around the world, including those like us which are long-standing friends of the United States, did the same. The announcement, when it was made, was thus very disappointing and difficult to understand.

These views have also been expressed in statements at EU level, and in direct contacts with US officials, by myself and officers of my Department. The US Government can be in no doubt about our view on this question.

Ireland looks forward in due course to establishing Embassies in Jerusalem to both Israel and the future Palestinian state, following the conclusion of a peace agreement and in accordance with international law. Until then, our Embassy to Israel will remain in Tel Aviv.

Efforts to restart the Middle East peace process are currently centred on the initiative being developed by the United States. The US move on Jerusalem has unfortunately made this initiative more difficult, but I believe that it is essential that these efforts persist. I have spoken at the Foreign Affairs Council to urge EU partners to engage with the US to encourage this initiative and to seek to shape it and ensure that it is in line with the key parameters for a settlement. I have myself spoken with the US Middle East team a number of times in this regard. I also spoke with Israeli and Palestinian leaders last week on this issue.

Foreign Conflicts

170. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the status of the situation in Yemen; the efforts being made by the EU in regard to the conflict and the humanitarian situation there; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24676/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): I am extremely concerned about the current situation in Yemen, which is the world's largest humanitarian crisis. I, and officials in my Department, have been monitoring the state of affairs in Yemen with growing anxiety, particularly in recent months as the humanitarian situation continues to deteriorate. After three years of war, three quarters of the population are estimated to require some form of humanitarian assistance. The situation is already untenable. I am particularly troubled by reports of growing tensions around the port of Hodeidah. About 80% of Yemen's humanitarian and commercial aid runs through this port and any interruption of this flow would lead to further suffering for civilians in Yemen.

Humanitarian access is a critical issue, and I have consistently called on all parties to the conflict to ensure that the people of Yemen receive the assistance they urgently need. Commercial access is equally important, since a population of over 20 million people cannot survive on aid alone. Officials from my Department met with the Saudi Embassy in Dublin late last year and again last month and relayed my strong concerns in relation to humanitarian access. The EU has also made representations to Saudi Arabia on this issue.

The EU is the largest humanitarian donor to Yemen and has provided over €170 million

in aid since the conflict began, to which Ireland contributes via the EU Development Budget. Ireland has provided €15.5 million in bilateral humanitarian assistance to Yemen since 2015, including €4million in assistance which was announced in March this year. Ireland also provides global funding to a number of organisations which are particularly active in Yemen including the World Food Programme, UNICEF and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

Ireland has also worked in the UN system to raise our grave concerns about human rights in Yemen. At the Human Rights Council in September 2017, Ireland was part of a small core group of countries that drove forward the adoption by consensus of a Resolution on Yemen. The resolution established a group of international experts to examine the facts in relation to violations of human rights and humanitarian law on the ground.

The EU has worked to keep communication channels open with all stakeholders and regional actors in Yemen. At the Foreign Affairs Council in December last year, I urged stronger EU action on humanitarian access in Yemen, and I will continue to raise these concerns with all appropriate interlocutors whenever possible.

The EU supports the work of Martin Griffiths, the new Special Envoy of the UN Secretary General for Yemen, and his team, and in particular his efforts to prepare a framework for negotiations to present to the UN Security Council in June. We hope that peace negotiations can be re-launched shortly afterwards. I believe that the new envoy will be able to engage all parties to the conflict to come back to the negotiating table, in order to achieve a sustainable solution for the people of Yemen. My EU colleagues and I are committed to supporting his work, and would be happy to meet with him at the Foreign Affairs Council to hear how we can best do that.

I can assure the Deputy that Ireland will continue to take every appropriate opportunity to press for a negotiated settlement to the conflict in Yemen, as well as respect for human rights and international humanitarian law, and improved humanitarian access. I believe that only way to bring about a long-term sustainable improvement in the situation for the Yemeni people is through a negotiated end to this conflict, and the EU stands ready to support this.

Northern Ireland

171. Deputy Niall Collins asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will report on recent efforts to restore the Executive in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24677/18]

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 ef-

fective 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.

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

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

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

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

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.

Diplomatic Representation

172. Deputy Niall Collins asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he has or is considering the prospect of reopening the embassy in Tehran particularly in view of the plan to double Ireland's global footprint; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24678/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Embassy of Ireland in Ankara is accredited on a non-residential basis to Iran. Ireland is also represented in Iran by an Honorary Consul.

A range of factors are taken into account in considering our diplomatic representation overseas, including our national political, economic and trade priorities, as well as the availability of resources. The Government is conscious of the political, economic and trade factors that might warrant the opening of a resident diplomatic mission in Iran – as in a number of other countries. This will be taken fully into account in ongoing work on the Global Footprint to 2025.

Emigrant Support Services

173. Deputy Niall Collins asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the steps and actions that have been taken since the publication of the report on challenges being faced by returning Irish emigrants; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24679/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): Since the publication of the Indecon Economic Report on Addressing Challenges Faced by Returning Irish Emigrants, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade has undertaken a number of steps, in conjunction with other Government Departments and State Agencies, to address the thirty recommendations made in the report.

In the first instance my colleague the Minister of State for the Diaspora, Ciarán Cannon T.D., wrote to all Government Departments seeking their response to the report, and specifically to the recommendations in the report that fell within their areas of responsibility. Further updates were provided by respective Departments at the meeting of the Inter-Departmental Committee on the Irish Abroad chaired by Minister of State Cannon on 16th May at Government Buildings.

Minister of State Cannon has also recently met directly with the Minister of State for Higher Education, Mary Mitchell O'Connor T.D. to discuss the education related recommendations that were made in the Indecon Report.

My Department has already implemented several of the Indecon Report's recommendations in relation to information provision. An enhanced 'Returning to Ireland' section containing more information and advice for returning emigrants has been developed for our dedicated diaspora website, the Global Irish Hub. Officials are working closely with the Citizen's Information Board to ensure that returning emigrants have the best information and advice possible to assist them in making the return back to Ireland.

Minister of State Cannon has also written to all motor insurance underwriters that operate in Ireland requesting information as to their approach, with a view to further information on motor insurance for returning emigrant drivers being made available, as recommended in the report.

It is my intention that a report will be made to Government on the progress made since the publication of the Indecon Report, in advance of the summer recess.

Passport Services

174. Deputy John Curran asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he is satisfied that the Passport Office has sufficient resources to deal with the peak in demand during the summer months; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24851/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Passport Service is currently in its peak season for passport demand with the vast majority of applications being received between February and August each year.

The Passport Service monitors the volume of applications on an ongoing basis to ensure that resources are available to meet demand. In order to respond to anticipated application increases and to seasonal demands, the Passport Service received sanction for 220 Temporary Clerical Officers (TCOs) this year to be appointed to the Passport Offices in Dublin and Cork. These TCOs are working together with permanent staff to process passport applications and to deal with the high number of enquiries being made through the Passport Service's various customer service channels.

The demand for passports is 7% higher at this period, in comparison to the same period last year. The Passport Service is meeting its target turnaround times for certain categories of applicants, and I acknowledge that there are delays in other categories. For applicants that have used the Online Passport Application service, the target turnaround timeframe of 10 working days (plus postage) is being met and in 50% of cases, applications are being processed in 5 working days (plus postage). The target timeframe of 15 working days for Passport Express renewals is also currently being met.

The Passport Service acknowledges that for certain categories such as first time applicants and applicants with lost or stolen passports, processing is taking longer due to additional security checks. The Passport Service is doing everything possible to ensure that passports are

processed as quickly as possible. In addition to the intake of TCOs, staff from other Divisions in the Department have been reassigned to assist with enquiries, and targeted overtime is available.

A central element of my Department's approach to managing increasing application volumes has been the implementation of service improvements in order to minimise the impact unusually high application volumes have on turnaround times. The Passport Reform Programme is delivering major upgrades to the passport service technology platforms and business processes as well as significant customer service improvements. The online passport application service, which was launched last year, will continue to make a major contribution to the effective management of exceptionally high volumes by allowing existing resources to be more effectively deployed within the Passport Service. I would encourage all applicants wherever possible to renew their passports using the online renewal service.

The Passport Service is satisfied that the combination of delivery upgrades to the technology platforms and application process, together with the recruitment of adequate TCOs and reallocation of resources from other divisions on a temporary basis, will meet the demand during peak season.

Passport Applications Administration

175. Deputy Eamon Scanlon asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the guidelines and timeframe for withdrawing an active passport application at an appointment in the Passport Office; the documentation required when submitting the new or duplicate application at the time of appointment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24974/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): Applicants who have submitted a passport renewal application through Passport Express may withdraw their original application and re-apply through the counter application service. This service is designed to accommodate applicants who have upcoming travel plans and have, in error, submitted their passport application through a channel which would not allow the application to be processed before their travel date.

If proof of travel is provided, the counter service allows for applications to be processed in timeframes shorter than those offered by Passport Express and the online passport application. First time passport applications can not avail of this service as the necessary security and identity checks do not allow for expediting of such applications. Full details on eligibility, terms and conditions and timeframes for all individual passport application channels are available on the Passport Service's website www.dfa.ie/passport.

All applicants who wish to resubmit a Passport Express application must book a counter appointment online at www.passportappointments.ie.

Resubmission of an application will require the original application to be cancelled. Applicants who are cancelling a Passport Express application must submit a written request to cancel their original application at the time of their counter appointment. This written request must be signed by the applicant (or applicant's parent/guardian in the case of a child's renewal application). All cancellation requests must cite the application number of the original application.

The applicant will be required to submit all necessary documentation at the time of their appointment, including:

A new fully completed application form, suitably witnessed and accompanied by new photo-

tographs.

The full relevant passport fee. Application fees in respect of the original application will be refunded to applicants following processing of the cancellation request. Additional processing fees apply for the counter application service depending on the processing timeframe requested. Full details on all applicable fees can be found on the passport Service's website here:

www.dfa.ie/passports-citizenship/top-passport-questions/passport-fees/.

Any required documents that were not submitted in respect of the original application must be submitted before the new application can proceed. Submission of incomplete application forms and supporting documentation will result in the passport application being delayed.

International Students

176. Deputy Patrick O'Donovan asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the supports available for second level schools that are promoting the option of second level education for international students here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25062/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): My Department does not undertake such activities. The national International Education Strategy – outlined in Irish Educated, Globally Connected: An International Education Strategy for Ireland, 2016-2020 – is under the direction of the Minister for Education and Skills. Furthermore, the Department of Education and Skills has informed my officials that it does not provide supports for second level schools seeking to attract international students. However, our Mission Network is always ready to guide and assist those seeking to promote their activities abroad.

Passport Applications Data

177. Deputy Mary Lou McDonald asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the number of passport applications processed by the Dublin passport office in 2016, 2017 and to date in 2018, in tabular form. [25151/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Passport Service located in my Department is one unified service composed of 3 constituent offices located in Mount Street, Dublin; Balbriggan, Co. Dublin and South Mall, Cork.

The following table shows how many passport applications were processed by the Passport Service's Dublin and Cork offices for the years requested:

Year	Total Passport Applications
2016	750,833
2017	789,701
2018*	450,055

*Jan 1 to May 31 2018

Passport Services

178. Deputy Mary Lou McDonald asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and

Trade the number of whole-time equivalent staff working in the Dublin passport office in 2016, 2017 and to date in 2018, in tabular form. [25152/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The following table details the number of Full Time Equivalent (FTE) Staff permanently employed by my Department and assigned to the Passport Service in both Dublin offices (Mount St. and Balbriggan) at the end of the year for 2016 and 2017 and at the end of May 2018.

Year	Number of staff
2016 (December 31)	225.3
2017 (December 31)	244.5
2018 (May 31)	266.9

Passport Services

179. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the annual pay bill for the Dublin passport office in 2016, 2017 and to date in 2018, in tabular form. [25153/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Department employs approximately 350 people in the Passport Offices in Mount Street, Balbriggan and in Cork.

The pay bill, including Employer's PRSI, for the permanent staff employed in Dublin and Balbriggan for 2016, 2017 and to the end of May 2018 is set out below.

My Department also employs Temporary Clerical Officers (TCOs) to meet seasonal demand, and the pay bill for these staff over the period in question, inclusive of Employer's PRSI, is also set out below.

Passport Office – Dublin/Balbriggan	2016	2017	2018 to end May
Permanent Staff	€10,740,147	€11,358,079	€4,778,942
TCOs	€1,692,444	€1,431,431	€409,350
TOTAL	€12,432,591	€12,789,510	€5,188,292

Passport Applications Data

180. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the number of passport applications processed by the Cork passport office in 2016, 2017 and to date in 2018, in tabular form. [25155/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Passport Service located in my Department is one unified service composed of 3 constituent offices located in Mount Street, Dublin; Balbriggan, Co. Dublin and South Mall, Cork.

The following table shows how many passport applications were processed by the Passport Service's Dublin and Cork offices for the years requested:

Year	Total Passport Applications
2016	750,833
2017	789,701

Year	Total Passport Applications
2018*	450,055

*Jan 1 to May 31 2018

Passport Services

181. Deputy Mary Lou McDonald asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the number of whole-time equivalent staff working in the Cork passport office in 2016, 2017 and to date in 2018, in tabular form. [25156/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The following table details the number of Full Time Equivalent (FTE) Staff permanently employed by my Department and assigned to the Passport Service's Cork office at the end of the year for 2016 and 2017 and at the end of May 2018.

Year	Number of Staff
2016 (December 31)	76.5
2017 (December 31)	78
2018 (May 31)	85.9

Passport Services

182. Deputy Mary Lou McDonald asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the annual pay bill for the Cork passport office in 2016, 2017 and to date in 2018, in tabular form. [25157/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): My Department employs approximately 350 people in the Passport Offices in Dublin, Balbriggan and in Cork.

The pay bill, including Employer's PRSI, for the permanent staff employed in Cork for 2016, 2017 and to the end of May 2018 is set out below.

My department also employs Temporary Clerical Officers (TCOs) to meet seasonal demand, and the pay bill for these staff over the period in question, inclusive of Employer's PRSI, is also set out below.

Passport Office – Cork	2016	2017	2018 to end May
Permanent Staff	€3,602,100	€3,603,236	€1,622,237
TCOs	€497,947	€445,224	€149,158
TOTAL	€4,100,047	€4,048,460	€1,771,395

Commencement of Legislation

183. Deputy Mattie McGrath asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the sections and parts of all legislation brought forward by his Department in each of the past four years that have yet to be commenced; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25179/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Protection of Cultural Property in the event of Armed Conflict (Hague Convention) Bill is the only legislation brought forward by my Department in the past four years that has yet to be commenced. It will commence in August 2018 to coincide with the entry into force of the Convention, for Ireland.

Passport Applications Data

184. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the number of passport applications received from applicants with an address in Northern Ireland in 2016, 2017 and to date in 2018, in tabular form. [25190/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The following table gives the available detail on numbers of passport applications received from Northern Ireland for the years requested:

Year	Number of applications
2016	67,582
2017	82,274
2018*	46,898

*Jan 1 to May 31 2018

Departmental Funding

185. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade his Department's capital allocation in each of the years 2019 to 2023; and the areas to which funds will be allocated in each of those years. [25572/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): Under the National Development Plan 2018 - 2027, my Department will have capital allocations, across its two Votes: Vote 27 - International Co-operation and Vote 28 - Foreign Affairs and Trade, for the years 2019 – 2022 as follows:

2019	€17 million
2020	€13 million
2021	€13 million
2022	€14 million

The National Development Plan does not include capital allocations beyond 2022, so the 2023 allocation will be decided in due course as part of the annual budgetary processes.

At this stage, the Department is not yet in a position to provide information by project area for each of the years 2019-2023, but, as set out in the National Development Plan 2018-2027, the Department's Strategic Capital Investment Priorities for the period 2019-2023 will be as follows:

Further announcements as part of the Doubling Our Global Footprint Initiative;

The Passport Reform Programme;

Investment in ICT infrastructure, and

Investment in the State's Global Property Portfolio, including the development of Ireland Houses with the State Agencies and the relevant Embassy in strategic locations.

Decisions on future allocations by area will be consistent with value for money principles, will provide clear benefits for the State and will depend on a range of factors, including staff, office and accommodation needs.

Passport Services

186. Deputy Seán Haughey asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade his plans to increase the number of post offices in the UK that accept express applications for Irish passport applications; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25661/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Passport Service offers a range of channels for submission of passport applications by Irish citizens in Great Britain. Advice and guidance on these channels is available on the Department's website at <https://www.dfa.ie/irish-embassy/great-britain/passports/how-to-apply-for-a-passport/>.

The award-winning, Online Passport Application service for adults was launched in March 2017 and offers the convenience of an online application facility 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for Irish citizens anywhere in the world, without the need for application forms, printed photos or witnesses.

This service has proved to be very convenient for both the citizen and the Passport Service with a target turnaround time of 10 working days (plus postage time). In fact in 50% of cases, applications are processed in 5 working days (plus postage time). This service will be available to further renewal categories, including children, by the end of 2018.

Applicants in Great Britain who are not eligible to apply via the Online Passport Application service can submit their applications at the designated post offices in Liverpool and Glasgow, by post to the Passport Office in Cork, or submit their application by appointment at the public counter at the Passport Office, London.

Taking into account the range of options currently available and the plans to extend the Online Passport Application service to further categories of applicants, I am satisfied that these services will meet the needs of Irish citizens in Great Britain without the need to further expand the passport express service in that region.

Ministerial Meetings

187. Deputy Seán Haughey asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade his plans to have a bilateral meeting with the US Secretary of State, Mr. Mike Pompeo; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25662/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): I met with then-Secretary of State Rex Tillerson in Washington DC last February, when we had the opportunity to discuss a wide range of issues, including the position of undocumented Irish citizens living in the US, the bilateral trade relationship and the Middle East Peace Process. I also briefed Secretary of State Tillerson on developments in Northern Ireland and on Brexit.

I have not yet had the opportunity to meet with Secretary of State Mike Pompeo but look forward to meeting with him in due course and to continuing the good discussions I had with his predecessor in February.

EU Data

188. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the EU fines paid in each of the years 2015 to 2017, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25733/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade has never paid any EU fines.

Primary Medical Certificates

189. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Finance if the case of a person (details supplied) will be examined; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24264/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As you may be aware, the Disabled Drivers and Disabled Passengers (Tax Concessions) Scheme provides relief from VAT and VRT on the purchase of an adapted car for transport of a person with specific severe and permanent physical disabilities, payment of a fuel grant, and an exemption from Motor Tax.

To qualify for the Scheme an applicant must be in possession of a Primary Medical Certificate. To qualify for a Primary Medical Certificate, an applicant must be permanently and severely disabled within the terms of the Disabled Drivers and Disabled Passengers (Tax Concessions) Regulations 1994 and satisfy one of the following conditions:

- be wholly or almost wholly without the use of both legs;
- be wholly without the use of one leg and almost wholly without the use of the other leg such that the applicant is severely restricted as to movement of the lower limbs;
- be without both hands or without both arms;
- be without one or both legs;
- be wholly or almost wholly without the use of both hands or arms and wholly or almost wholly without the use of one leg;
- have the medical condition of dwarfism and have serious difficulties of movement of the lower limbs.

The Department has no role in the granting of Primary Medical Certificates to any applicant. The PMC is issued by the relevant Senior Medical Officer in the HSE, or failing that an appeal may be made to the Disabled Drivers Medical Board of Appeals. The Medical Board of Appeals must be independent in its determinations and so the Department has no influence over the outcome of any appeal.

Disabled Drivers and Passengers Scheme

190. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Finance the reason all persons with a registered disability who have mobility issues are not classified equally when it comes to eligibility for reductions in taxation in respect of their purchase of vehicles which are required for their transport (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24641/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As you may be aware, the Disabled Drivers and Disabled Passengers (Tax Concessions) Scheme provides relief from VAT and VRT on the purchase of an adapted car for transport of a person with specific severe and permanent physical disabilities, payment of a fuel grant, and an exemption from Motor Tax.

To qualify for the Scheme an applicant must be in possession of a Primary Medical Certificate. To qualify for a Primary Medical Certificate, an applicant must be permanently and severely disabled within the terms of the Disabled Drivers and Disabled Passengers (Tax Concessions) Regulations 1994 and satisfy one of the following conditions:

- be wholly or almost wholly without the use of both legs;
 - be wholly without the use of one leg and almost wholly without the use of the other leg such that the applicant is severely restricted as to movement of the lower limbs;
 - be without both hands or without both arms;
 - be without one or both legs;
 - be wholly or almost wholly without the use of both hands or arms and wholly or almost wholly without the use of one leg;
 - have the medical condition of dwarfism and have serious difficulties of movement of the lower limbs.
- The Scheme represents a significant tax expenditure. Between the Vehicle Registration Tax and VAT foregone, and the fuel grant, the scheme cost €65 million in each of 2016 and 2017. This figure does not include the revenue foregone in respect of the relief from Motor Tax provided to members of the Scheme.

The Scheme and qualifying criteria were designed specifically for those with severe and permanent physical disabilities. From time to time I receive representations on behalf of individuals and organisations who believe they would benefit from the scheme but do not qualify under the criteria. While I have sympathy for such cases, given the scale and scope of the scheme, there are no plans to review the medical criteria for eligibility at this time.

Code of Conduct on Mortgage Arrears

191. **Deputy Peter Fitzpatrick** asked the Minister for Finance the protection in place for persons who want to restructure their mortgage in order that they can keep their family home (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24683/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As the Deputy is aware assisting those in mortgage arrears is a priority for this Government and there are a number of policies and supports in place for those in mortgage difficulties. The Deputy will be aware that the Code of Conduct on Mortgage Arrears (CCMA) sets out statutory requirements for mortgage lenders and credit servicing firms dealing with borrowers in or facing arrears on the mortgage loan

secured by their primary residence.

Lenders must ensure that the case of each borrower is individually assessed on its merits to ensure fairness. The Mortgage Arrears Resolution Process (MARP) framework sets out the steps which lenders must follow. A lender must carry out affordability assessments by examining each case on its own merits and must base its assessment of the borrower's full circumstances including their ability to pay as determined by up to date information on a Standard Financial Statement (SFS).

A lender must explore all options for alternative repayment arrangements (that they offer) in order to offer the most viable solution to each borrower. The Code also requires lenders to review an alternative repayment arrangement at appropriate intervals for the type and duration of the arrangement. The lender is also obliged to carry out a review of an alternative repayment arrangement at any time, if requested by the borrower.

It may not be possible for your constituent and their lender to agree on an alternative repayment arrangement. If the lender is not willing to offer your constituent an alternative repayment arrangement, they must give the reasons in writing. If they do offer an arrangement, your constituent may choose not to accept it. If your constituent is not happy with the lender's treatment of their case, or if they feel the lender has not complied with the CCMA, they can appeal to the lender under the Central Bank's Consumer Protection Code 2012. If they remain unsatisfied with the outcome of an appeal or complaint, they can refer to the Financial Services and Pensions Ombudsman (FSPO).

The FSPO have developed an extensive guide for complainants which can be found at <https://www.fspo.ie>

As the Deputy is aware, notwithstanding the fact that the State is a significant shareholder in the institution, the Minister has no direct function in the relationship between AIB/EBS and its customers. The Minister must ensure that the bank is run on a commercial and independent basis. It would not be appropriate, therefore, for the Minister to intervene in the case of any particular customer.

However, I have received the following response from AIB:

"AIB Group (including EBS) has a dedicated unit established specifically to work with customers in financial difficulty. Customers, who are in arrears on their family home, are requested to provide a Standard Financial Statement together with supporting documents. The case is then assessed by a dedicated portfolio manager who is trained specifically to deal with customers in financial difficulty.

The Bank offers a number of long term solutions (some of which are unique to AIB Group). Solutions are offered to customers based on their affordability. The primary objective of AIB Group is to work with customers in difficulty and, wherever possible, agree a sustainable solution that enables them to stay in their family home.

The Bank has also established relationships with third parties, for example IMHO and MABS, in order to provide every opportunity for customers in financial difficulty to engage with the Bank to try to agree a sustainable long term solution.

In summary, AIB Group's objective is to prioritise the customers' family home and where possible agree a long term sustainable solution that enables families to stay in their home."

Sale of State Assets

192. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Finance the way in which his Department has used the moneys the State received from the sale of its stake in Aer Lingus; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24941/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Connectivity Fund was established as a sub-fund of the Ireland Strategic Investment Fund (ISIF) in 2015 to invest the €335 million proceeds from the sale of the State's shareholding in Aer Lingus with the aim of enabling and enhancing Ireland's physical, virtual and energy connectivity.

The NTMA have advised me that in 2017, the ISIF entered into two new investment commitments from this sub-fund (Port of Cork and Shannon Airport) and increased their investment commitment to Aqua Comms, bringing total investment commitments from the Connectivity Fund to €93 million:

- Aqua Comms: €26 million equity investment, to support Ireland's first dedicated subsea fibre-optic network interconnecting New York, Dublin and London via Killala, Co. Mayo

- daa: €35 million investment in a 2028 bond issuance underpinning long-term financing for the operator of Dublin and Cork airports.

- Port of Cork: €18 million junior debt facility to enable the Port of Cork to relocate from its existing constrained locations in Cork City to a redeveloped site in Ringaskiddy.

- Shannon Airport: €14 million loan facility to support the upgrade of the existing runway, a core element of Shannon Airport's capital investment programme.

Several other Connectivity Fund investment opportunities are currently being assessed under the ISIF's "double bottom line" mandate, which is to seek both commercial return and economic impact. These connectivity opportunities include potential investments in energy, air, sea and further data connectivity projects and businesses seeking to expand and enhance Ireland's international links.

NAMA Operations

193. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Finance the plans of NAMA for a property (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25091/18]

194. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Finance if he will request NAMA to bring a property (details supplied) and its garden areas under control; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25092/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 193 and 194 together.

I wish to inform the Deputy that NAMA does not own property. Instead NAMA acquired loans and its role is as a secured lender.

In this instance, I am advised that NAMA has never had any involvement in this particular property.

Capital Expenditure Programme

195. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Finance if a proposal (details supplied) will be costed. [25589/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): In order to assess the impact of capital smoothing of the proposed voted capital expenditure model the actual capital expenditure in 2016 and 2017 along with that planned for 2018 have to be included in the calculation, as these impact on 2019, 2020 and 2021.

The following table takes this into consideration and, combining it with the plan as submitted, results in the following amounts of capital expenditure recognised under the expenditure benchmark each year:

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Exchequer capital expenditure, € millions	8,343	8,861	9,618	10,118	10,725
Amount after capital smoothing applied, € millions	942	943	1,030	1,074	596
Exchequer capital expenditure, per cent of GNI* +	3.7	3.8	4.0	N/A	N/A
Exchequer capital expenditure, per cent of GDP +	2.5	2.6	2.7	N/A	N/A

+Nominal GDP and GNI* out to 2021 were published in annex 2 of the Stability Programme Update 2018. These series have not been estimated beyond 2021.

Insurance Costs

196. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Finance the progress of the cost of insurance working group; when it is likely to report; the status of recommendations it may make; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24241/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Deputy will be aware that the Government established the Cost of Insurance Working Group in July 2016. Since then, the Working Group, now chaired by Minister of State for Financial Services and Insurance, Mr. Michael D'Arcy T.D., has published two reports examining the factors contributing to the increasing cost of insurance for motorists and the cost of employer and public liability insurance for businesses. These Reports identified and made recommendations on short, medium and long-term measures to help reduce the cost of insurance for consumers and businesses.

Questions - Written Answers

The initial focus of the Working Group was the issue of rising motor insurance premiums and the 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, which are set out in an Action Plan.

In its second phase, the Working Group examined the cost of business insurance, in particular employer liability insurance and public liability insurance. This work culminated in the publication of the Report on the Cost of Employer and Public Liability Insurance on 25 January 2018. The Report makes 15 recommendations with 29 associated actions to be carried out in agreed timeframes, which are set out in an Action Plan. All 29 actions are scheduled to be implemented before the end of 2019, with 26 due for completion this year.

Work is ongoing on the implementation of the recommendations from the two Reports by the relevant Government Departments and Agencies and there is a commitment within each that the Working Group will prepare quarterly updates on its progress.

The fifth such update was published on 11 May 2018 and is the first to detail the implementation of both primary Reports. It shows that, in relation to the Report on the Cost of Motor Insurance, of the 50 separate deadlines set to date within the Action Plan, 40 have been met, while substantial work has also been undertaken in respect of the nine action points categorised as “ongoing”. Meanwhile, all eight actions due during Q1 2018 from the Report on the Cost of Employer and Public Liability Insurance have been completed on time.

Both of the primary Reports and all of the quarterly updates are available on the Department’s website, within “The Cost of Insurance Working Group” sub-section of the main “Insurance” section.

It should be noted that the most recent CSO data (for May 2018) indicates that private motor insurance premiums have decreased by 19% since peaking in July 2016. While it is accepted that motor insurance premiums are still at a very high level for many people, such statistics indicate at least a greater degree of stability in the market on an overall basis.

The Working Group will continue to focus on implementing the recommendations of the two primary Reports. The cumulative effects of the completion of the two reports’ recommendations, with the appropriate levels of commitment and cooperation from all relevant stakeholders, should achieve the objectives of delivering fairer premiums for consumers and businesses, and a more stable and competitive insurance market without unnecessary delay.

Stamp Duty

197. Deputy Sean Fleming asked the Minister for Finance when measures will be commenced involving a reduction in stamp duty to 1% in respect of the purchase of agricultural land which is purchased for farm consolidation purposes; the relevant dates for these transactions to have taken place to be eligible for same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24249/18]

225. Deputy Michael McGrath asked the Minister for Finance the position on the application of a reduced rate of stamp duty on certain farm consolidation transactions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24971/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 197 and 225 together.

As I have outlined in a number of PQ replies recently, the measure legislated for in section 68 of Finance Act 2017 (which was not a Budget measure) will allow a farmer to claim relief from stamp duty where he or she sells and purchases land for the purposes of consolidating an existing farm holding has been introduced, subject to a commencement order after a full consideration of any administrative or EU state-aid requirements.

For the relief to operate, there must be both a sale and a purchase of land within a period of 24 months of each other. Where other qualifying conditions are satisfied, stamp duty will only be paid to the extent that the value of the land that is purchased exceeds the value of the land that is sold. A reduced rate of 1% will be charged on the excess, if any, of the purchase value. If the sale takes place before the purchase, then relief will be given at the time of purchase. However, if the purchase takes place first, then stamp duty will have to be paid but can subsequently be refunded when the sale takes place.

A number of qualifying conditions must be satisfied before the relief can apply. The most important condition is that Teagasc must issue a certificate stating that a sale and purchase or an exchange of farmland was made for farm consolidation purposes. This is the certificate that is currently required in relation to the capital gains tax relief. The criteria to be used by Teagasc for this purpose and the information to be supplied to Teagasc are contained in guidelines published by the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine:

(<https://www.agriculture.gov.ie/media/migration/formsdownloads/V12CGTGuidelinesfinal060315.pdf>).

A purchaser of farmland must retain ownership of the farmland for a period of five years and must use the land for farming. Where any part of the land is disposed of before the end of this five-year holding period, the stamp duty relieved can subsequently be recovered by Revenue, or partly recovered as appropriate.

The measure will apply to all transactions which took place on or after 01 January 2018, so farmers who consolidate their holdings prior to the commencement of the relief will still be eligible.

I hope to be able to sign a commencement order for this measure shortly.

State Aid Investigations

198. **Deputy Noel Rock** asked the Minister for Finance the party that benefits from interest or other payments accrued while a company's (details supplied) funds are on deposit in an escrow account following the European Commission ruling on the matter and subsequent transfer of funds; and if studies have been carried out on the payments and costs which would be accrued in both holding and managing the funds. [24261/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): While the Government has never accepted the Commission's analysis in the Apple State aid decision, we have always been clear that we are fully committed to ensuring that recovery of the alleged State aid takes place without delay and have committed significant resources to ensuring that this is achieved as quickly as possible.

On 24 April 2018, the Escrow Framework Deed which sets out the detailed legal agreement regarding the recovery of the alleged State aid was signed by me on behalf of the Government and also signed by Apple. This followed recent announcements that the Bank of New York Mellon London Branch has been selected for the provision of escrow agency and custodian

services to the fund. Amundi, BlackRock Investment Management (UK) Limited and Goldman Sachs Asset Management International were formally appointed for the provision of investment management services on 5 June 2018. The collection of the alleged State aid has commenced and it is anticipated that of the funds will flow into the escrow account in significant tranches with the expectation that the full recovery will be effected by the end of Q3 2018.

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

Insurance Industry Regulation

199. Deputy Michael McGrath asked the Minister for Finance if his attention has been drawn to situations in which insurance companies are pursuing claimants or plaintiffs for their High Court and-or Court of Appeal costs even when the claim is successful; if the Central Bank has a regulatory role in the pursuit of legal costs by insurance companies; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24358/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As Minister for Finance, I have no role in how an insurance company seeks to pursue the recovery of legal costs no matter what the circumstances of the case. It should also be noted that the Central Bank of Ireland does not have any regulatory role in relation to this matter either.

Notwithstanding the above, the Cost of Insurance Working Group, chaired by Minister of State Michael D'Arcy TD, examined the issue of the discretion of the court to exercise in favour of the winning party - the 'costs follow the event' principle, as part of its examination of the cost of Employer and Public Liability Insurance. This was as a result of business stakeholders expressing frustration at the lack of consistency in the application of this general principle where a claim is dismissed and the insurer is still required to meet its own costs. It was argued by such stakeholders that failure to follow this principle meant that these costs were ultimately reflected in an increase in the premium of policyholders, even though the claim had been found to have no basis.

The Cost of Insurance Working Group, in its report, acknowledged that the determination of who is to pay costs is ultimately at the discretion of the judge in any given case on the basis of the relevant facts, and that in certain cases costs not following the event can be appropriate, for example, in cases involving the State where an important legal principle has been raised. However, there was a view expressed that inconsistency in the application of this principle may lead insurers to settle an otherwise defendable case, unilaterally, or in consultation with the policyholder, solely because that strategy is more cost efficient than successfully defending an action, and not being able to recover their costs.

The Cost of Insurance Working Group believes that a consistent application of the 'costs follow the event' principle – recognising that it should remain a matter for the independent judiciary to be the key decision makers in this regard – would probably be one of the most effective ways of tackling fraud and exaggerated claims, as it would give insurers the confidence to challenge more robustly cases which they have doubts about. It would also remove the common reason expressed by insurers that uncertainty in relation to legal costs forces them to settle regularly on the court steps rather than to dispute a case in court. In addition, it would mean that the minority of plaintiffs who seek to exploit the system through fraud or exaggeration would have to think more carefully about the consequences for themselves, should they lose the case.

The Cost of Insurance Working Group believes that such an approach should have no bearing or impact on plaintiffs who have a deserving case, and genuinely feel it needs to be settled in court.

Finally, I understand that the Legal Services Regulation Act 2015 , which my colleague, the Minister for Justice and Equality, Charlie Flanagan TD, has responsibility for, makes extensive provision for a new and enhanced legal costs regime that will bring greater transparency to how legal costs are charged by legal practitioners, along with a better balance between the interests of legal practitioners and those of their clients. Section 169 of the Act puts the general principle of ‘costs follow the event’ on a statutory footing. I understand that this section will become operational once the Office of the Legal Costs Adjudicator is established, which is currently projected for Q3 of 2018 and as Minister for Finance, I welcome this.

Pensions Reform

200. Deputy Thomas P. Broughan asked the Minister for Finance his views on tax relief for pension contributions; when his Department’s working group on this issue will report to Dáil Éireann; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24388/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The State encourages individuals to save for retirement by offering tax incentives when saving for a pension. Subject to certain restrictions, relief is provided on eligible contributions and the investment income and capital gains of a pension scheme or fund are exempt from income and capital gains tax.

Under the Government’s Roadmap for Pensions Reform 2018-2023 a number of specific actions have been allocated to the Interdepartmental Pensions Reform and Taxation Group (IDPRTG). The IDPRTG is chaired by the Department of Finance and includes representatives from this Department as well as from the Department of Public Expenditure & Reform, the Department of Employment Affairs & Social Protection, Revenue and the Pensions Authority.

Among the actions assigned to the IDPRTG is Action 3.13, which provides for a review of the cost of funded supplementary pensions to the Exchequer in the context of the development of a new auto-enrolment scheme.

The IDPRTG is currently considering this issue along with all other actions allocated to it and is expected to report on this matter by end Q3 2018. As Minister for Finance, tax policy is a matter for me and my Department, and as such, the work of the IDPRTG will be considered in that context.

Maternity Benefit

201. Deputy Róisín Shortall asked the Minister for Finance the rationale for the taxation of maternity benefit; his views on whether the taxation creates an unfair burden on single income households in which a new mother has ceased working in order to spend time with her child; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24474/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): It is my view that the tax treatment of Maternity Benefit payments does not create any additional burden on single income households as the Deputy has suggested.

It is a general principle of Irish taxation that, as far as possible, income from all sources should be subject to tax. As a result, the majority of social welfare payments are deemed as taxable for income tax purposes. Consistent with this approach, the charge to income tax on

Maternity Benefit payments applies to ensure that those with identical incomes will be treated the same for income tax purposes.

The extent to which taxation actually arises, if at all, in a given case depends on the total level of income that the individual or couple concerned has in the relevant period. In circumstances where the Maternity Benefit is paid in lower income households, such mothers will likely not have to pay any income tax as their tax liability would not be higher than the amount sheltered by their personal tax credits. This is most likely to be the case in circumstances where social welfare payments are the only source of income for a household.

In addition, recognising that such payments have an important purpose to support women on Maternity Leave from work, Maternity Benefit payments are exempt from Universal Social Charge and PRSI.

Carbon Tax Yield

202. Deputy Catherine Connolly asked the Minister for Finance his plans to increase the rate of carbon tax in the upcoming budget; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24487/18]

203. Deputy Catherine Connolly asked the Minister for Finance the amount of carbon tax collected each year since its introduction in 2010; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24488/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 202 and 203 together.

It is the long standing practice of the Minister of Finance not to comment on any Budgetary decision which may or may not be taken in advance of the Budget.

I can however inform the Deputy that officials from my Department and the ESRI have undertaken a project, as part of a joint research programme, to examine a range of carbon price scenarios, their impact on national CO₂ emissions as well as across production sectors of the economy and households. The research will be incorporated into the Energy and Environmental Tax Strategy Group Paper and could inform future policy developments in this area.

I am advised by Revenue that the carbon tax collected each year from 2010 to 2016 is available on the Revenue's statistics website at:

<http://www.revenue.ie/en/corporate/documents/statistics/excise/net-receipts-by-commodity.pdf>.

The carbon tax collected in 2017 is €419.6 million.

Central Bank of Ireland Investigations

204. Deputy Michael McGrath asked the Minister for Finance the status of the Central Bank's investigation into an agency (details supplied); if the investigation has been completed; if not, when it will be completed; if so, the outcomes of same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24540/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am informed by the Central Bank that

an investigation into RSA Ireland is ongoing and at an advanced stage. It would not be appropriate for me to comment on this matter further at this time.

Sovereign Debt

205. Deputy Michael McGrath asked the Minister for Finance the effect the political issues in Italy have had on Irish sovereign bond yields; if a risk analysis has been undertaken by his Department on financial issues arising from the political environment in Italy; the way in which Ireland is exposed to a potential financial crisis in Italy; if this has been discussed at the recent Economic and Financial Affairs Council meeting; the decisions that were made to mitigate the risks of the situation in Italy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24543/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): My Department is monitoring developments in Italy.

Irish government bonds have performed steadily in the face of recent market turbulence triggered by the political situation in Italy. The yield on the ten year benchmark Irish government bond has fluctuated in a relatively narrow range around the one per cent mark since early May.

The NTMA has already issued over €11 billion of benchmark bonds this year; this is seventy per cent of the mid-point of the €14 billion to €18 billion target issuance range. There is no bond auction scheduled this month. The NTMA will announce its Quarter 3 auction schedule on 2 July.

The Irish financial system's exposure to Italy is relatively limited. Consolidated banking data show that domestic banks' (AIB, BOI, and PTSB) total foreign claims on Italy was 1.4 per cent of their own total foreign claims in quarter 4 2017, or 0.5 per cent of their total assets.

The Economic and Financial Affairs Council is updated on appropriate developments in the economic and financial spheres when it convenes. This matter did not feature as an agenda item at the May Council.

Programme for Government Implementation

206. Deputy Micheál Martin asked the Minister for Finance the status of the implementation of the programme for partnership Government as it applies to his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24575/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Programme for a Partnership Government contains 63 commitments within the remit of the Department of Finance and substantial progress has been made in implementing these commitments: 12 commitments have been implemented, 50 are on-going or underway, while 1 has not been advanced at this stage. The Department of the Taoiseach will shortly publish the latest Annual Report and this will provide more detail for the Deputy.

The full list of the Programme for a Partnership Government commitments that come under the remit of my Department is set out in the Statement of Strategy 2017-2020 which is available on my Department's website.

Pension Provisions

207. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Finance his plans to revise the rules allowing retired persons withdrawing their remaining retirement fund but who are unable to do so due to the requirement to have additional income of €12,700; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24602/18]

208. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Finance if a retired person can be exempt on medical grounds from the rules precluding them from withdrawing in full their retirement fund due to the requirement placed on them to have €12,700 additional income; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24603/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 207 and 208 together.

I am advised by Revenue that, on retirement, an individual in a defined contribution pension savings arrangement has the option, after taking a tax free retirement lump sum, of either using the funds remaining to purchase an annuity or transferring those funds into an Approved Retirement Fund (ARF).

Where such an individual is under the age of 75 at the time of exercising the option and does not have a minimum guaranteed income of €12,700 per annum, she or he is required under section 784C of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997 (TCA) to set aside an amount of €63,500 (or the entire fund if less than €63,500) in an Approved Minimum Retirement Fund (AMRF) or use that amount to purchase an annuity.

The minimum income requirement is to ensure the individual has an adequate and secure source of guaranteed retirement income for her or his remaining years.

While there is no exemption from this provision on medical grounds, the rules of an occupational pension scheme approved under section 772 of the TCA may permit commutation of a pension – that is, payment to an individual of her or his pension fund by way of lump sum – if the individual is suffering from a terminal illness at the time the pension becomes payable. Further details can be found in Paragraph 7.5 of Revenue's Pensions Manual (<https://www.revenue.ie/en/tax-professionals/tdm/pensions/chapter-07.pdf>). Whether such a payment would be allowed depends on the rules of the specific pension scheme.

I do not currently have any plans to amend the existing provisions which relate to the transfer of funds into an AMRF or to allow for increased access to funds in an AMRF. However, these provisions, along with other taxation measures, are kept under review. The Deputy may be aware that the Government published A Roadmap for Pensions Reform 2018 – 2023 last February, which contains in Strand 3, “Improving Governance and Regulation”, a plan for a broad review of the utilisation and regulation of ARF products.

Shared Services

209. **Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy** asked the Minister for Finance if all staff will be transferred to the National Shared Services Office in view of the transfer of his Department's functions in Tullamore back to Dublin; if staff expressing an interest in being transferred to the Department of Education and Skills or other Departments will be facilitated in circumstances in which a vacancy exists; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24615/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I wish to inform the Deputy that it is

envisioned that all staff who currently work in the Tullamore office will have the opportunity to transition into the National Shared Services Office when the current functions transfer back to Dublin. Not all of the current functions completed in Tullamore will transfer back to Dublin as some functions are transitioning into the National Shared Services Office in the Tullamore facility and all the current Finance staff should have roles. It is planned that the overall number of staff working in the facility will increase requiring additional recruitment.

There are processes in place to accommodate staff who are interested in transferring to other Departments and the wider civil service and these can be used where required. All requests for a transfer to other Departments or locations are examined on a case by case basis and the Department will try to facilitate these requests in the context of the business needs of the area.

VAT Yield

210. Deputy Anne Rabbitte asked the Minister for Finance the estimated annual losses to the Exchequer which result from retailer VAT reclaims owing to below invoice cost selling of alcohol; the estimated losses to the Exchequer since the repeal of the groceries order in 2006 relating to below invoice cost selling of alcohol; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24618/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): VAT is a tax on the value added to a supply, and the collection and recovery of VAT takes place at each stage of the chain of supply from manufacturing to retailer. Under EU and domestic VAT rules, traders who are registered for VAT collect VAT on the goods and services that they sell. In turn, such traders are entitled to recover the VAT they incur on their business inputs used in the purchase or production of goods or delivery of services. Consequently, if there is a decrease in value at any stage in the process the trader is entitled to a refund of the excess of VAT incurred over that collected.

In this case, where a retailer is in a situation of net VAT gain as a result of below cost selling, this is not a loss to the Exchequer or an additional benefit to the retailer, it is merely how VAT is charged.

Professional Fees

211. Deputy Michael McGrath asked the Minister for Finance further to Parliamentary Question No. 180 of 29 May 2018, the annual tax cost of the tax relief on professional membership fees before the changes made in 2011; the annual tax cost of the relief on professional membership fees after 2011; the amount of a tax revenue saving that resulted from the 2011 changes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24649/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): For the tax years 2004 to 2010, section 118(5E) of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997 provided that expenses incurred by an employer on behalf of an employee in connection with the payment (or reimbursement) of annual membership fees of a professional body were exempt from tax where such membership was regarded as “relevant to the business” of the employer. This section was repealed in Finance Act 2011 and ceased to apply from the tax year 2011. At the time this provision was expected to yield €3 million to the Exchequer in 2011 and €5 million in a full year.

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 pro-

fessional 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. I am advised by Revenue that the information on tax returns relating to claims for expenses does not separately distinguish professional membership fees from other allowable deductions. It is therefore not possible to provide an estimate of the cost or yield related to any specific expense type and so it is not possible to give an exact figure for the annual cost of the relief in its present form. The Tax Expenditures Report 2017 published by my Department includes an estimated cost at €3.75 million per annum.

However I would stress that the figures above cited are very much estimates. The cost in any given year would obviously depend on a number of variables. These include the total of taxpayers claiming and the cost of the subscriptions or fees involved and Revenue do not hold separate data on these.

The Deputy may also be interested in the numbers and tax cost associated with all types of 'Allowable Expenses', details of which are given in Revenue's 'Cost of Tax Expenditures' publication available at:

<https://www.revenue.ie/en/corporate/information-about-revenue/statistics/tax-expenditures/costs-expenditures.aspx>.

VAT Exemptions

212. Deputy Kevin O'Keeffe asked the Minister for Finance if a provision will be considered whereby a specific industry (details supplied) can reclaim VAT paid on certain products. [24651/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): VAT is governed by the EU VAT Directive, with which Irish VAT law must comply. The transport of passengers is exempt from VAT under Irish VAT law and bus operators are exempt from VAT on the supply of transport in this respect. Where a service is exempt under VAT law this means that the supplier of the service does not charge VAT on the supply but it also means that they are not entitled to claim VAT on any business-related expenditure. Only businesses registered for VAT who make taxable supplies are entitled to claim back VAT incurred on their inputs.

Historically Ireland operates a VAT refund order whereby persons not registered for VAT can reclaim VAT paid on touring coaches in set circumstances. However, spare parts of buses and coaches are not included under this refund order. Because the refund order historically derogates from normal VAT rules, it is not possible under EU VAT law to extend this refund order to bus and coach parts.

Bank Contracts

213. Deputy Peter Fitzpatrick asked the Minister for Finance if he will address a matter (details supplied) regarding bank accounts closures; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24765/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As the Deputy is aware notwithstanding the fact that the State is a shareholder in the institution, the Minister has no direct function in the relationship between Bank of Ireland and its customers. The Minister must ensure that the bank is run on a commercial and independent basis. It would not be appropriate therefore, for the Minister to intervene in the case of any particular customer.

However, I have received the following response from Bank of Ireland:

Help-To-Buy Scheme Eligibility

214. Deputy Michael McGrath asked the Minister for Finance the definition of “first-time buyer” used by the Central Bank and the Revenue Commissioners, respectively. [24791/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Central Bank has advised that, for the purposes of the Central Bank mortgage lending rules, a first-time buyer is defined (in SI 47 of 2015) as “a borrower to whom no housing loan has ever before been advanced”. The statutory instrument also provides that “where the borrower under a housing loan is more than one person and a housing loan has previously been advanced to any one of those persons, none of those persons is a first-time buyer”.

In respect of the Revenue Commissioners, I am advised that a “First time buyer” is defined in the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997 for the purposes of both the Help to Buy scheme and the DIRT Refund scheme, as follows:

1. Section 477C (Help to Buy) provides for the definition of first-time buyer for the purposes of the Help to Buy scheme, as follows:

“first-time purchaser” means an individual who, at the time of a claim [for Help to Buy] has not, either individually or jointly with any other person, previously purchased or previously built, directly or indirectly, on his or her own behalf a dwelling.”

2. Section 266A (Repayments of DIRT to first-time purchasers) provides a definition of first-time buyer for the purposes of any repayment of DIRT arising, as follows:

“first-time purchaser” means a person, being an individual who, at the time of a relevant purchase or on the relevant completion date, as the case may be, has not, either individually or jointly with any other person or persons, previously purchased or previously built directly or indirectly on his or her own behalf any other dwelling.”.

Help-To-Buy Scheme Eligibility

215. Deputy Michael McGrath asked the Minister for Finance the reason the Central Bank deems a returning emigrant who never owned a residential property here but did abroad for a period as a non-first-time buyer; his views on whether this classification is unfair; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24792/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Central Bank has advised that for the purposes of the Central Bank mortgage lending rules, a first time buyer is defined as a borrower to whom no housing loan has ever before been advanced. It also provides that where the borrower under a housing loan is more than one person and one or more of those persons has previously been advanced a housing loan, none of those persons is a first-time buyer.

The Central Bank also advised that it introduced proportionate limits specifically to allow a certain flexibility by lenders when assessing individual cases, such as may be the case in instances referred to in the question. The proportionate limits mean that lenders are able to make decisions based on an individual borrower's circumstances up to a specific limit. In the case of second and subsequent buyers, lenders can in any year lend up to 20 per cent of the value of PDH mortgages at LTV levels in excess of the 80 per cent LTV cap which generally applies to such borrowers. Also, lenders will still be required to assess an individual borrower's affordability and lend prudently on a case by case basis, in line with the requirements of the Consumer Protection Code and other regulations.

Bank Contracts

216. Deputy Jackie Cahill asked the Minister for Finance if he will address a matter regarding the sale of a property (details supplied). [24837/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As the Deputy is aware notwithstanding the fact that the State is a significant shareholder in the institution, the Minister has no direct function in the relationship between AIB/EBS and its customers. The Minister must ensure that the bank is run on a commercial and independent basis. It would not be appropriate, therefore, for the Minister to intervene in the case of any particular customer.

However, I have received the following response from AIB:

Community Employment Schemes Operation

217. Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin asked the Minister for Finance if a person that is taking part in a community employment scheme must pay the universal social charge; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24840/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Payments made to participants in Community Employment Schemes are not liable to the Universal Social Charge. These payments are treated as social welfare payments and are therefore exempt from the Universal Social Charge under section 531 AM of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997.

Motor Insurance Data

218. Deputy John Curran asked the Minister for Finance if the setting up of the national database to track insurance claims to develop an understanding of the way in which the cost of claims is affecting motor insurance premiums will be fast tracked in view of the high cost of motor insurance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24850/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Deputy should note at the outset that the National Claims Information Database is a complex project which needs to be carefully developed and implemented in order for it to be effective over the longer term. A key requirement of the database is that information is collected in a consistent way from insurers in order that a clear picture in relation to claim levels and costs can be obtained. Therefore as well as the work my Department has been doing in developing the draft legislative framework for the database, the Central Bank has been carrying out a parallel technical specification exercise with insurers in relation to the specific type of information that needs to be collected for the database.

By way of further update, you should be aware that 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 am hopeful that the Bill will be published in the coming weeks. 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, it can be considered and approved expeditiously and thus meet yours and others wishes to have the database in place as soon as possible.

Financial Services and Pensions Ombudsman Remit

219. Deputy Michael McGrath asked the Minister for Finance if the Financial Services and Pensions Ombudsman is permitted to receive and consider complaints from persons that are of the view they were mis-sold payment protection insurance prior to the six year limit prior to July 2007, that is, the scope covered by the Central Bank's review and prior to 2002 since the enactment of the Financial Services and Pensions Ombudsman Act 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24855/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Financial Services and Pensions Ombudsman Act 2017 provides for the following time limits in relation to long-term financial services.

“(2) A complaint in relation to -

(a) conduct referred to in section 44(1)(a) that, subject to the requirements specified in subsection (3), relates to a long-term financial service, or

...

shall be made to the Ombudsman within whichever of the following periods is the last to expire:

(i) 6 years from the date of the conduct giving rise to the complaint;

(ii) 3 years from the earlier of the date on which the person making the complaint became aware, or ought reasonably to have become aware, of the conduct giving rise to the complaint;

(iii) such longer period as the Ombudsman may allow where it appears to him or her that there are reasonable grounds for requiring a longer period and that it would be just and equitable, in all the circumstances, to so extend the period.

(3) The requirements referred to in subsection (2)(a) are that -

(a) the long-term financial service concerned has not expired or otherwise been terminated more than 6 years before the date of the complaint, and the conduct complained of occurred during or after 2002, or

(b) the Ombudsman has allowed a longer period under subsection (2)(iii)."

In relation to Payment Protection Insurance (PPI), I understand from the Financial Services and Pensions Ombudsman's Office that this may, in certain circumstances, be considered a long term financial product when there is a life cover or death benefit attaching. In addition if the loan to which the payment protection is attached is over five years and one month in duration, it would be considered a long term financial product. In these circumstances the Ombudsman may investigate a complaint where the conduct complained of occurred during or after 2002 or at his discretion before this date.

I should stress that it must appear to the Ombudsman that there are reasonable grounds for requiring the longer period and it would be just and equitable in all the circumstances to extend the period.

I further understand from the Central Bank that a total of €71.0m was refunded to approximately 83,500 customers since 1 July 2007 by the eleven credit institutions covered by the Central Bank's PPI review.

Tax Yield

220. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the amount of income tax paid by persons aged over 65 years of age in each of the years 2015 to 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24873/18]

221. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the amount of income tax paid in respect of occupational and other non-social protection pensions in each of the years 2015 to 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24874/18]

222. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the amount of income tax paid in respect of social protection pensions in each of the years 2015 to 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24875/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 220 to 222, inclusive, together.

In relation to [Question 24873/18], I am advised by Revenue that for 2015, the most recent year for which data are available, it is tentatively estimated that €1,340m in Income Tax was paid where the taxpayer (either partner in the case of jointly assessed couples) was aged over 65.

Regarding [Question 24874/18], I am advised by Revenue that it is tentatively estimated that individuals in receipt of occupational pensions (and not receiving or earning any other taxable income) contributed approximately €300m in Income Tax in 2015. Due to the manner in which data are recorded on Revenue systems, it is not possible to report on the tax paid by those in receipt of both occupational pensions and other sources of income. Nor can the tax paid on income from other, non-social welfare pensions be separately identified.

In relation to [Question 24875/18], I am advised by Revenue that income from social wel-

fare pensions is not separately recorded on tax returns and is amalgamated with income from other sources in the calculation of tax liabilities. As such, it is not possible to report on the tax paid in respect of social protection pensions. In addition, it is important to note that while in general all income arising from social welfare pensions is liable to Income Tax (though not Universal Social Charge), in most cases an individual solely in receipt of a social welfare pension will be below the threshold to pay tax, after tax credits are taken into account.

Banking Licence Applications

223. Deputy Jackie Cahill asked the Minister for Finance if under current legislation it is possible for a local authority to secure a banking licence to enable it to raise funds for the purpose of issuing mortgages; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24888/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Any person seeking a licence to carry out banking business in Ireland will need to satisfy the relevant statutory requirements set out in the Central Bank Act 1971, which transposes the authorisations provisions of the Capital Requirements Directive (Directive 2013/36/EU). These requirements relate to, *inter alia*, initial capital, the suitability of shareholders and members, the programme of operations and structural organisation, and the corporate characteristics of the applicant. Under the Single Supervisory Mechanism, the European Central Bank (ECB) has exclusive competence for granting licences. Pursuant to section 9 of the Central Bank Act 1971, the Central Bank of Ireland's role is to propose decisions to the ECB to grant licences. In the absence of all relevant information and the completion of the full assessment of an application in the normal course, the Central Bank is not in a position to provide any views on potential decisions that may be made in this context.

The prohibition on accepting deposits from members of the public without a banking licence does not apply to local authorities by virtue of section 7(4)(f) of the Central Bank Act 1971 (provided that this activity is subject to regulations and controls intended to protect depositors and investors). However, this exemption does not appear to preclude an application for a banking licence by a local authority. In addition, notwithstanding any exemption from an obligation to hold a banking licence in order to engage in deposit-taking such person may still require an authorisation to engage in lending to retail consumers, e.g. a retail credit firm authorisation under Part V of the Central Bank Act 1997.

Regarding the remit of local authorities, the statutory role and responsibilities assigned to local authorities are as provided for in legislation and overall policy responsibility for such matters are a matter for my colleague the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government. Nevertheless, in relation to mortgage lending, the Deputy will note that, under section 11 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1992, a local authority, subject to regulations made by the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government with the consent of the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, may make loans for the purpose of acquiring or constructing of houses.

Under the powers conferred by this provision, the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government, Mr Eoghan Murphy T.D. launched the Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan Scheme earlier this year. It was set up in accordance with the Housing (Rebuilding Ireland Home Loans) Regulations 2018, which set out the criteria for local authorities to issue loans and the eligibility to avail of loans under the Scheme.

The Scheme which replaced the Home Purchase Loan and the Home Choice Loan Schemes, enables credit-worthy first-time buyers to access sustainable mortgage lending to purchase new or second-hand properties in a suitable price range.

The scheme is targeted at first-time buyers who have access to an adequate deposit and have the capacity to repay a mortgage, but who are unable to access a mortgage sufficient for them to purchase their first home from a commercial lender. The Scheme is operated by the local authorities with support from the Housing Agency, which carries out assessments of applications on behalf of the authorities.

At the end of May 2018, the Agency had received approximately 1,500 applications for assessment from the local authorities. The Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government is confident that the Scheme is working well and will achieve its objective of providing loans to people who meet the criteria set out in the Regulations.

Motor Insurance Costs

224. Deputy Ruth Coppinger asked the Minister for Finance if his attention has been drawn to difficulties musicians face in obtaining commercial motor insurance (details supplied); his plans to address this matter; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24890/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As Minister for Finance, I am responsible for the development of the legal framework governing financial regulation. Neither I nor the Central Bank of Ireland can interfere in the provision or pricing of insurance products, as these matters are of a commercial nature, and are determined by insurance companies based on an assessment of the risks they are willing to accept. This position is reinforced by the EU framework for insurance which expressly prohibits Member States from adopting rules which require insurance companies to obtain prior approval of the pricing or terms and conditions of insurance products. Consequently, I am not in a position to direct insurance companies as to the pricing level or terms or conditions that they should apply in respect of particular categories of drivers or vehicles.

In making their individual decisions on whether to offer cover and what terms to apply, insurers will use a combination of rating factors, which include how the vehicle is used, as well as the age and type of the vehicle, the age of the driver, the relevant claims record and driving experience, and the number of drivers. My understanding is that insurers do not all use the same combination of rating factors, and as a result prices and availability of cover varies across the market. In addition, insurance companies will price in accordance with their own past claims experience, meaning that in relation to particular categories, different insurance companies will have different views.

However, it is acknowledged that pricing in the motor insurance sector has been subject to a lot of volatility in recent years with a related problem, as referred to in the PQ, being the availability of cover in the first place. These issues were 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”. Both the Report and the quarterly updates are available on the Department’s website, within “The Cost of Insurance Working Group” sub-section of the main “Insurance” section.

It should be noted that the most recent CSO data (for May 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. In addition, with the full implementation of the Motor Report, I believe that Ireland will be more attractive to new entrants thus increasing capacity as well as competition which should have a positive impact in niche areas such as motor insurance for musicians.

Finally, as the Deputy may be aware, if a consumer is unable to secure a quotation on the open market, he/she may be in a position to avail of the Declined Cases Agreement (DCA) process. Under the terms of the DCA, which is adhered to by all motor insurers in Ireland, the insurance market will not refuse to provide insurance to an individual seeking insurance if the person has approached at least three insurers and has not been able to obtain cover from them. In this regard, there are further details available on the Insurance Ireland website, while more generally, Insurance Ireland also operates a free Insurance Information Service for those who have queries, complaints or difficulties in relation to obtaining insurance. The relevant contact details are: feedback@insuranceireland.eu or declined@insuranceireland.eu or 01-6761914.

Question No. 225 answered with Question No. 197.

Mortgage Lending

226. Deputy Michael McGrath asked the Minister for Finance the maximum age that a borrower can be scheduled to have normal repayments for the duration of a mortgage; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24986/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): There are a number of measures in place in order to protect consumers who are taking out a mortgage. These measures seek to ensure that lenders act with due skill, care and diligence in the best interests of their customers and that borrowers are protected from the beginning to the end of the mortgage life cycle; for example, through protections at the initial marketing and advertising stage, in assessing the affordability and suitability of the mortgage and at a time when borrowers may find themselves in financial difficulties during the course of the credit agreement.

For example, the European Union (Consumer Mortgage Credit Agreements) Regulations 2016, which transposed the Mortgage Credit Directive into Irish law, provides that lenders must act honestly, fairly, transparently and professionally, taking account of the rights and interests of the consumer, in relation to the provision of mortgage credit. In particular, lenders must assess the creditworthiness of consumers (which must be carried out on the basis of information on the consumer's income and expenses and other financial and economic circumstances which is necessary, sufficient and proportionate) and that assessment shall take account of factors relevant to verifying the prospect of the consumer being able to meet his or her obligations having regard to the terms of the proposed credit agreement. Furthermore, it provides that the lender shall only make mortgage credit available where the creditworthiness assessment indicates that the consumer's obligations resulting from the credit agreement are likely to be met in the manner required under the agreement. In addition, the European Banking Authority has published Guidelines on Creditworthiness Assessment which provides additional detail on the creditworthiness requirements of the Mortgage Credit Directive which indicates, in guideline 4.3, that if the mortgage loan term extends past the consumer's expected retirement age, the lender should take appropriate account of the adequacy of the consumer's likely income and ability to con-

tinue meet obligations under the credit agreement in retirement. Furthermore, where advisory services are being provided in relation to mortgage credit, the Regulations provide that it will be necessary to obtain information regarding the consumer's personal and financial situation, preferences and objectives and that any assessment shall take into account reasonable assumptions as to risks to the consumer's situation over the term of the proposed credit agreement.

Also, the Central Bank's Consumer Protection Code 2012 imposes 'Knowing the Consumer and Suitability' requirements on lenders. Lenders are required to assess affordability of credit and the suitability of a product or service based on the individual circumstances of each borrower, including the age of the borrower. In particular, a regulated entity must gather and record sufficient information from the consumer prior to offering, recommending, arranging or providing a product or service appropriate to that consumer. The level of information gathered should be appropriate to the nature and complexity of the product or service being sought by the consumer, but must be to a level that allows the regulated entity to provide a professional service and must include details of the consumer's needs and objectives, personal circumstances (including age where relevant) and their financial situation. Also, prior to offering, recommending, arranging or providing a credit product to a personal consumer, a lender must carry out an assessment of affordability to ascertain the consumer's likely ability to repay the debt, over the duration of the agreement. A regulated entity must take account of the result of the affordability assessment when deciding whether a personal consumer is likely to be able to repay the debt for that amount and duration in the manner required under the credit agreement.

Under the provisions of the Code, when assessing the suitability of a product or service for a consumer, the regulated entity must, at a minimum, consider and document whether, on the basis of the information gathered:

- the product or service meets that consumer's needs and objectives;
- the consumer is likely to be able to meet the financial commitment associated with the product on an ongoing basis and is financially able to bear any risks attaching to the product or service;
- the consumer has the ability to repay the debt in the manner required under the credit agreement, on the basis of the outcome of the assessment of affordability; and
- the product or service is consistent with the consumer's attitude to risk.

However, subject to complying with relevant consumer protection and other regulatory/macro prudential requirements, it is then a matter for individual lenders to set their own lending policies and to make their own commercial decisions on individual mortgage or other credit applications.

Motor Insurance Claims

227. Deputy Willie Penrose asked the Minister for Finance when the legislation which will permit the compensation of victims arising from road traffic accidents which involved vehicles which were insured with a company (details supplied) will be brought before Dáil Éireann; if same can be expedited in the context that such accident victims to date are only receiving 65% of their due compensation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24994/18]

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 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 has been included in the Insurance (Amendment) Bill, which has now been finalised in liaison with the Office of Parliamentary Counsel.

I obtained Government approval last week to proceed with publication of this Bill. 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 personal injury motor insurance claimants including the additional 35% to those who have settled their claims and have already received compensation of 65% of their claim. The same principle of full payment will apply to third party property motor insurance claimants subject to a limit of €1.22m (in line with Motor Insurance Bureau of Ireland limits).

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.

Insurance Industry Regulation

228. Deputy Michael McGrath asked the Minister for Finance his views on insurance companies charging extra to HSE first responders; if there is a regulatory prohibition of such a practice; if there are tax incentives or reliefs for first responders for the role they play; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25035/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am disappointed that some insurance companies are continuing to apply an additional charge to volunteer cardiac first responders who are providing such a valuable community service. However, it is important to 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, I am not in a position to direct insurance companies as to the pricing level or terms or conditions that they should apply in respect of particular categories of drivers or vehicles, including HSE first responders.

In making their individual decisions on whether to offer cover and what terms to apply, insurers will use a combination of rating factors, which include how the vehicle is used, as well as the age and type of the vehicle, the age of the driver, the relevant claims record and driving experience, and the number of drivers. My understanding is that insurers do not all use the same combination of rating factors, and as a result prices and availability of cover varies across the market. In addition, insurance companies will price in accordance with their own past claims

experience, meaning that in relation to particular categories, different insurance companies will have different views.

However, it is acknowledged that pricing in the motor insurance sector has been subject to a lot of volatility in recent years with a related problem, being the availability of cover in the first place. These issues were 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”. Both the Report and the quarterly updates are available on the Department’s website, within “The Cost of Insurance Working Group” sub-section of the main “Insurance” section.

It should be noted that the most recent CSO data (for May 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. In addition, with the full implementation of the Motor Report, I believe that Ireland will be more attractive to new entrants thus increasing capacity as well as competition which should have a positive impact in the pricing of motor insurance for certain categories of drivers such as cardiac first responders.

With regard to tax incentives or reliefs, there is no specific measure or relief targeted at HSE first-responders. However, if a paramedic employed by the HSE is obliged to incur an expense that is wholly and exclusively for the purpose of his or her employment, and not reimbursed by his or her employer, a deduction may be available under section 114 of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997. Section 114 provides for a tax deduction in respect of expenses incurred wholly, exclusively and necessarily by an individual in the performance of the duties of his or her employment.

Financial Services Regulation

229. Deputy Michael McGrath asked the Minister for Finance the position regarding customers who were undercharged mortgages in 2013 by a bank (detail supplied); if the Central Bank formally investigated the bank in relation to the issue; the number of mortgage accounts affected; the outcome of the resolution of these cases; the number of these cases that are with the Financial Services and Pensions Ombudsman; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25089/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Central Bank has advised that errors by lenders (and other regulated financial services firms) are monitored by the Central Bank through a number of supervisory tools, including on-site inspection work and through the statutory requirement imposed on lenders to notify the Central Bank of certain errors within timeframes prescribed by the Consumer Protection Code. All such errors, including those related to mortgage accounts, are thoroughly analysed and monitored by the Central Bank to ensure

that they are fully resolved, with customers notified and refunded promptly, systems' failures corrected and controls implemented to prevent a recurrence of the error. The Central Bank considers each error on its own merits, with the overarching objective of protecting consumers' interests, including ensuring that they are not left out of pocket.

While the Central Bank cannot comment on individual interactions with regulated entities it can confirm that, as required by the Central Bank's statutory Consumer Protection Code, it was notified by the particular bank referred to by the Deputy of a substantial under-collection error. The bank confirmed that the error affected approximately 1,300 accounts with a total of approximately €41 million under collected from customers. The error was as a result of a failure to move customers to full capital and interest payments after the initial interest only period on their mortgage expired. A number of repayment options were afforded to customers at that time. This error was monitored by the Central Bank to its resolution. However, any customer who is not satisfied with how they were treated by the bank continue to be entitled to make a complaint to the particular institution regarding the error. However, if the customer is not satisfied by the outcome at that level then they can make a complaint to the Financial Services and Pensions Ombudsman.

The Financial Services and Pensions Ombudsman (FSPO) has also advised that section 72 of the Central Bank (Supervision and Enforcement) Act 2013, gave the FSPO the power to publish reports identifying regulated financial service providers who have had at least three complaints against them substantiated or partly substantiated. The Ombudsman published a list of such providers in his Annual Review each year since 2014 and the Ombudsman proposes to continue to publish a list of financial service providers that in any financial year have 3 or more complaints relating to a financial service upheld, substantially upheld or partially upheld.

Financial Services Sector

230. Deputy Michael McGrath asked the Minister for Finance his views on situations in which investors using a stockbroker service are left exposed if that stockbroker goes into liquidation; if there is an equivalent to the financial services compensation scheme in the UK; if so, the parameters of such a scheme; the way in which it works vis-à-vis the liquidation process; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25090/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Investor Compensation Directive (97/9/EC) sets out the basis for clients of investments firms to receive statutory compensation when an authorised investment firm fails. I understand that in the UK, the UK Financial Services Compensation Scheme operates a scheme for Deposit Guarantee, Insurance Guarantee and Investor Compensation purposes.

In Ireland, the Investor Compensation Act, 1998, transposes the requirements of the Directive and provides for the establishment of the Investor Compensation Company DAC ("ICCL"). The ICCL administers the Irish Investor Compensation Scheme.

The Scheme operated by the ICCL only deals with investor compensation matters and functions on the basis that eligible investors submit claims for compensation in circumstances where an investment firm fails and is unable to repay monies owed, or, return money and financial instruments held, administered or managed, on behalf of the client, in accordance with its legal and contractual obligations. The limit of compensation is 90% of the eligible investors net loss, subject to a maximum payment of €20,000 per eligible investor. In order for the ICCL to make a payment to an eligible investor, an Administrator must certify to the ICCL the compensatable loss of the eligible investor. In circumstances where an Official Liquidator has been appointed

to an investment firm, the Act provides that the Official Liquidator may be appointed as Administrator for investor compensation purposes. Certified compensation payments are made from a fund which the ICCL collects and manages from authorised investment firms or licensed credit institutions in Ireland. Finally, contained on the ICCL website (www.investorcompensation.ie) is a Plain English Information Booklet for Consumers, and the Deputy may find this of assistance.

Commencement of Legislation

1. Deputy Mattie McGrath asked the Minister for Finance the sections and parts of all legislation brought forward by his Department in each of the past four years that have yet to be commenced; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25178/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As the Deputy is aware the Oireachtas, when enacting legislation, in many instances provides a discretion to the relevant Minister in respect of the appropriate time to commence an Act, or certain provisions of an Act.

I set out in the attached table details of legislative provisions passed by the Oireachtas since 1 January 2013 but which are not yet formally commenced and for which I, as Minister for Finance, have lead responsibility.

-	Act	Provision	Purpose
1.	Finance Act 2017	ss. 12(1) & 12(2), 68(1)	Section 12 concerns allowances for childcare and fitness centres. Section 68 relates to amendments to farm consolidation relief.
2.	Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank Act 2017	s. 3	s. 3 shall come into operation on the day on which the State becomes a member of the Bank in accordance with the terms of the Agreement
3.	Finance Act 2016	s. 19s. 28	s. 19 relates to balancing allowances and balancing charges. 28 relates to disposals of business or farm on “retirement”

-	Act	Provision	Purpose
4.	Finance Act 2015	s. 46	s. 46 relates to a requirement to make electronically a return or make a claim, submission or declaration for the purposes of any requirement of excise law.
		s. 76	s. 76 requires a property agent to include in a return of information the tax reference number of each property owner and the Local Property Tax (LPT) number in respect of each residential property.
5.	Finance Act 2014	s. 74	s. 74 relates to relief from stamp duty for certain leases of farmland.
6.	National Treasury Management Agency (Amendment) Act 2014	s. 5 (in part)	s. 5 relates to amendments to Acts specified in Schedule 1 and Schedule 2 to the Act.
		s. 6(a)	s. 6(a) provides for the repeal of the National Pensions Reserve Fund Act 2000 (other than s. 30).
		s. 6(d)	s. 6(d) provides for the dissolution of the Investment of the National Pensions Reserve Fund and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2009 (other than sections 9 and 11 to 13).
		s. 50	s. 50 provides for the dissolution of the National Pensions Reserve Fund Commission.
		s. 54 (in part)	s. 54 relates to the transitional provisions in Schedule 4.

Questions - Written Answers

-	Act	Provision	Purpose
		Schedule 1	Part 2, Item (1)(b) – relates to the deletion from Schedule 2 to the Ombudsman Act 1980 of “National Pensions Reserve Fund Commission” Part 4, Items (2)(b), 2(c), (4), 7(b), 7(c), 9(b), 9(c), 10(b), 12(b), 12(c), 12(d) – relate to amendments to the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997 Part 8 – relates to the amendment of the Credit Institutions (Stabilisation) Act 2010
		Schedule 2	Part 1, Item 1(b) – relates to amendments of the Ethics in Public Office (Prescribed Public Bodies, Designated Directorships of Public Bodies and Designated Positions in Public Bodies) Regulations 2004 Part 2, Item 1(b) – relates to amendment to the Official Languages Act 2003 (Public Bodies) Regulations 2006 Part 4 – relates to amendment of the Payments (Banks, Building Societies, Credit Unions and Savings Banks) Regulations 2008 Part 6, Items 1(a), 2(b) – relates to the amendment of the Payments (Insurance Undertakings) Regulations 2011
		Schedule 4	Paragraph 15 – relating to the final accounts of the National Pensions Reserve Fund Commission Paragraph 17 – relating to the final annual report of the National Pensions Reserve Fund Commission

-	Act	Provision	Purpose
7.	Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland Act 2014	s. 12	s. 12 relates to the alienation of shares in the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland by the Minister for Finance.
8.	Finance Act (No. 2) 2013	s. 45	s. 45 relates to entrepreneur relief

Vehicle Registration

232. Deputy Noel Grealish asked the Minister for Finance the reason customs officials are continuing to seize vehicles which have been outlined in a ruling, namely leased and borrowed vehicles from outside the State when the State has still not acted in accordance with the ruling by the European Court of Justice to amend its laws and systems for applying vehicle registration tax in the State following the ruling in September 2017 that Ireland is in breach of its obligations under Article 56 of the TFEU; the reason there has been no change of legislation in accordance with the ruling; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25218/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am advised by Revenue that the obligation to register a vehicle is contained in the Finance Act 1992, section 131 and the obligation to register it within thirty days of bringing it into the State is provided for in Statutory Instrument 318 of 1992, Vehicle Registration and Taxation Regulations, regulation 8(1). This general principle, that vehicles being used in Ireland must be registered in Ireland, is consistent with EU law and I have no plans to introduce any changes in this regard.

The Court of Justice of the European Union did find in September 2017 that it is disproportionate for a Member State to levy the full registration tax where a vehicle is the subject of a lease in another Member State that is determined precisely and is known in advance (C-552/15). My officials are in communication with the European Commission about the extent of this ruling and I will be bringing forward measures in the forthcoming Finance Bill to implement it.

Consumer Protection

233. Deputy Michael McGrath asked the Minister for Finance the regulatory approach to hire purchase agreements; the role of different authorities in this regard; the application of the consumer protection code in this context; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25241/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Both the Central Bank and the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (CCPC) have certain functions and legal powers in relation to the provision of hire-purchase agreements.

Under current legislation (Consumer Credit Act 1995), the Central Bank has an overall role in relation to the operation of hire purchase agreements and the CCPC has responsibility for authorising and supervising the credit intermediaries. A “credit intermediary” is defined as “a person who in the course of his business arranges or offers to arrange for a consumer the provision of credit or the letting of goods in return for a commission, payment or consideration of any kind from the provider of the credit or the owner, as the case may be”. The CCPC provides licenses to credit intermediaries and keeps an online list of credit intermediaries holding a valid

authorisation which is available on the CCPC website www.ccpc.ie.

The CCPC also deals with complaints about the advertising of Credit Agreements, issuing Pawnbrokers licenses and the advertising of car finance on credit intermediary websites and in the media. The CCPC's remit is limited to authorisation, as opposed to having a regulatory role for PCPs. It also has a specific statutory remit to provide personal finance information and education to assist consumers.

The Financial Services and Pensions Ombudsman can also investigate complaints from individual consumers about credit intermediaries.

The Consumer Protection Code does not apply to hire purchase and consumer hire agreements.

The Deputy will be aware of the recent publications by the Central Bank and the CCPC on Personal Contract Plans which are a form of hire purchase. My Department is examining these publications and will give careful consideration to what further actions, including consumer protection measures, if any would be appropriate in the light of those reports.

Banking Sector

234. Deputy Pearse Doherty asked the Minister for Finance the discussions his Department or the Central Bank has had with their British counterparts regarding the sale of a bank (details supplied) in view of the implications for another bank; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25255/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The British Government's divestment policy for its equity stake in Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS) has long been signalled and the recent sales are an expected part of that strategy. Therefore, I have not been in contact with my counterparts in relation to the recent sale.

I met with senior personnel in RBS and Ulster Bank in May of this year. RBS has publicly stated its commitment to Ireland, and Ulster Bank has informed me that it is seeking to compete and grow for the benefit of its customers, the Irish economy and its shareholders.

The Central Bank has advised that due to statutory confidentiality requirements it is not in a position to comment on its supervisory engagement with individual firms.

Tax Code

235. Deputy Catherine Connolly asked the Minister for Finance his plans to reintroduce the windfall gain tax on rezoned lands abolished in budget 2015; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25264/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The National Asset Management Agency Act 2009 amended the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997 by providing for an 80% windfall tax on profits or gains arising from disposals of development land, to the extent that those gains were attributable to a relevant planning decision.

Section 31 of Finance Act 2014 repealed the 80% tax rate on these profits or gains with effect from 1 January 2015.

The impetus for this latter amendment to the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997 came from the views expressed by various parties in both the private and public sector, with which the Minister for Finance at the time agreed, that the windfall tax provisions were acting and would act as an impediment to land rezoning, land development and redevelopment and to land sales for development.

The re-introduction of such a windfall tax on a similar basis is likely to act as a disincentive to landowners to dispose of such property, which could be detrimental to the Government policy to encourage home building.

In any event sales of land, including rezoned land, are normally subject to Capital Gains Tax at a rate of 33 per cent. I consider this rate to be appropriate and therefore I have no plans to introduce a windfall gain tax on rezoned lands.

Financial Transactions Tax

236. Deputy Catherine Connolly asked the Minister for Finance the steps being taken to introduce a financial transactions tax; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25265/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): In September 2011 the European Commission presented a proposal for a Financial Transaction Tax (FTT) in all Member states of the EU to be levied on all financial instrument transactions between financial institutions where at least one of the transaction parties is located within the EU. The proposed rate on exchanges of shares was 0.1% and the proposed rate for derivative transactions was 0.01%. The tax would be levied on financial institutions – non-financial institutions would not be covered.

Ireland currently has a tax on financial transactions, a Stamp Duty on transfers of shares in Irish incorporated companies, which currently stands at 1%. In 2017 this stamp raised €428 million (€389 million in 2016).

The report ‘Getting Ireland Brexit Ready’ which was published in October 2016 in conjunction with Budget 2017, committed the Department of Finance to conduct a review of stamp duty on share transactions in 2017.

Following from this, the Department of Finance launched a review and associated public consultation under the title ‘Review of the Application of Stamp Duty to Stocks and Marketable Securities of Irish Incorporated Companies’ in September 2017.

A report on the outcome of this review and public consultation is currently being prepared for my consideration in advance of Budget 2019.

In relation to discussions at EU level, the Government’s position is that an FTT would be best applied on a wide international basis to include the major financial centres to prevent the danger of activities gravitating to jurisdictions where taxes are not levied on financial transactions.

Notwithstanding this, the Government previously indicated that it did not wish to stand in the way of EU Member states that wish to work together to implement an FTT and in this regard adoption of a decision formally authorising enhanced cooperation took place during the Irish Presidency of the EU in January 2013.

The proposal for a Directive from the European Commission in the area of FTT was published in February 2013. Ireland had many concerns about the proposal as drafted, not the least

of which were the potential impacts on, and the trading of, Irish Sovereign debt in the secondary market and in total, the potential negative impact on the liquidity of the financial sector as a whole.

Our concerns are widely shared amongst other Member states, including some of the participating countries.

Opponents of the EU FTT, including Ireland, continue to argue that it only makes sense if it covers many countries or else transactions will shift toward those financial centres which are not covered by it.

Much uncertainty still remains as to the form any FTT might take or if the initiative will be agreed to at all.

Banking Sector

237. Deputy Pearse Doherty asked the Minister for Finance the basis on which a bank can cease providing banking services to a business; the opportunity such a business has to contest such a decision; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25375/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As the Deputy will be aware, in my role as Minister for Finance I have no direct function in the relationship between the banks and their customers; and the provision of banking services to any customer is a commercial decision for the banks.

However, General Principle 2.11 of the Consumer Protection Code 2012 requires that an entity, without prejudice to the pursuit of its legitimate commercial aims, does not through its policies, procedures, or working practices, prevent access to basic financial services.

The SME Regulations (2015) also stipulate that, where a regulated entity decides to withdraw or amend a credit facility agreement it shall promptly provide the borrower with an explanation of the reasons for the decision to withdraw or amend the credit facility agreement.

If customers are unhappy with the service received from a firm which is regulated by the Central Bank, they are entitled to make a complaint by writing directly to the firm concerned. Depending on their circumstances, the complaints handling provisions of either the Consumer Protection Code or the SME Regulations will apply. A complaint under these can include an expression of grievance or dissatisfaction by a consumer in relation to the failure or refusal of a regulated entity to provide a product or service.

Regulated entities have procedures that they must follow on receipt of complaints from customers, including acknowledging the complaint and responding to that complaint within a certain timeframe.

If a business with an annual turnover of less than €3 million is not happy with the response received from the regulated entity they may raise the complaint with the Financial Services and Pensions Ombudsman. Under the Consumer Protection Code (2012) and the SME Regulations (2015) the regulated entity is also obliged to inform the complainant that they may be in a position to make a complaint to the Financial Services and Pensions Ombudsman, and of the contact details of the FSPO.

Property Tax Exemptions

238. Deputy John Lahart asked the Minister for Finance his plans to lower the local property tax for senior citizens in budget 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25498/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Earlier this year, I announced a review of the Local Property Tax (LPT). The review included a public consultation process which provided all interested parties and individuals with an opportunity to submit their views on the future of the LPT.

The focus of the review will be on property price developments and it will also examine the outstanding recommendations of the last review of the LPT in 2015. It is expected that the review will be completed at the end of August 2018 and that the report will provide a number of policy choices for consideration.

I would also point out that a system of deferral arrangements is currently available where there is an inability to pay LPT and where specified conditions are met. These conditions are set out at the following address on the Revenue website: (<https://www.revenue.ie/en/property/local-property-tax/deferral-of-payment/index.aspx>).

There are four separate categories of deferral available:

- Income Threshold;
- Personal Representative of a deceased person;
- Personal insolvency; and,
- Hardship grounds

These deferrals apply to all those liable to LPT where the conditions are met.

Departmental Budgets

239. Deputy Jonathan O'Brien asked the Minister for Finance his Department's capital allocation in each of the years 2019 to 2023; and the areas to which funds will be allocated in each of those years. [25571/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): My Department's Capital Allocation provides for the routine acquisition of IT equipment and systems and certain premises expenses relating to the buildings it occupies. Aside from these types of expenditure my Department does not have any long or medium term Capital Projects.

For 2018 the Department's allocation is approximately €1.7 million. €1.5 million is allocated to Office Premises, and €0.2m is allocated for IT Services.

OPW manage the tender process and the contractual arrangements in relation to expenses relating to the premises the Department occupies.

At present the Department has not made allocations beyond 2018 although some of the work currently in progress may not be complete by the end of the year. We will be setting our 2019 allocation during the Estimate's process.

If the Deputy is referring to the Mid-Term Review of the Capital Plan, the Department of

Finance Vote Group has been allocated €91 million in capital expenditure over 2018-2021. An indicative capital envelope of €100 million is provided for 2022-2027.

The vast bulk of this capital funding is for the Office of the Revenue Commissioners. This is to enable the Office of the Revenue Commissioners to deliver further IT Development (PAYE Modernisation). The project represents the most significant reform of the administration of the PAYE system in over fifty years. The objective of the project is that employers, employees and Revenue will all have access to the most accurate and up-to-date information available relating to pay, tax, PRSI and USC deductions. This will ensure that the right amount is collected at the right time from employees, and that employers pay their correct liabilities when required.

VAT Payments

240. Deputy Joan Burton asked the Minister for Finance the VAT payments received for each month from January to May 2016, 2017 and 2018 in addition to a summary of refunds under headings (details supplied). [25625/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that the VAT collected from 2016 to 2018 for each of the months January to May is provided in the table below. The figures for 2018 are provisional and may therefore be subject to future revisions.

The Deputy may be interested to note that additional detailed information relating to VAT MOSS transactions are now published on the Revenue website at the following link:

<https://www.revenue.ie/en/corporate/information-about-revenue/statistics/registrations-assessments-transactions/vat-moss.aspx>.

	Month	2016 (€m)	2017 (€m)	2018 (€m) (provisional)
VAT remitted from domestic consumption	Jan	€ 2,276.7	€ 2,526.8	€ 2,789.8
	Feb	€ 506.1	€ 516.0	€ 487.7
	March	€ 1,816.2	€ 1,996.6	€ 2,120.8
	April	€ 491.8	€ 364.2	€ 435.5
	May	€ 2,046.5	€ 2,285.2	€ 2,360.5
VAT collected on imports	Jan	€ 110.5	€ 142.1	€ 110.2
	Feb	€ 98.2	€ 144.0	€ 128.6
	March	€ 100.6	€ 128.6	€ 128.5
	April	€ 104.6	€ 131.2	€ 106.1
	May	€ 107.7	€ 125.1	€ 135.0
VAT MOSS: Gross received	Jan	€ 2.1	€ 0.8	€ 0.1
	Feb	€ 37.9	€ 107.3	€ 69.1
	March	€ 1.0	€ 0.3	€ 0.7
	April	€ 1.8	€ 0.7	€ 0.2
	May	€ 47.1	€ 61.5	€ 74.1

	Month	2016 (€m)	2017 (€m)	2018 (€m) (provisional)
VAT MOSS: Amount re- tained	Jan	€ 1.5	€ 0.2	€ 0.0
	Feb	€ 29.0	€ 97.9	€ 56.3
	March	€ 0.5	€ 0.0	€ 0.0
	April	€ 1.7	€ 0.3	€ 0.2
	May	€ 37.1	€ 52.2	€ 60.4
VAT refunds	Jan	-€ 295.6	-€ 352.1	-€ 463.0
	Feb	-€ 352.7	-€ 318.3	-€ 366.8
	March	-€ 417.6	-€ 342.6	-€ 305.4
	April	-€ 337.6	-€ 294.4	-€ 377.9
	May	-€ 331.9	-€ 416.4	-€ 491.9

Revenue Commissioners Audits

241. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Finance if he will request the Revenue Commissioners to carry out an immediate audit of a company (details supplied) and to transmit by way of a spontaneous exchange of information under Article 9 of Council Directive 2011/16/EU to the tax authorities of all other member states details of the properties rented in their countries through the platform; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25626/18]

242. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Finance if he will request the Revenue Commissioners to carry out an immediate audit of a company (details supplied) and to transmit by way of a spontaneous exchange of information under Article 9 of Council Directive 2011/16/EU to the tax authorities of all other member states details of residents of those states selling goods through this platform; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25627/18]

243. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Finance if he will request the Revenue Commissioners to carry out an immediate audit of a company (details supplied) and to transmit by way of a spontaneous exchange of information under Article 9 of Council Directive 2011/16/EU to the tax authorities of all other member states details of residents of those states advertising through the platform; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25628/18]

244. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Finance if he will request the Revenue Commissioners to carry out an immediate audit of a company (details supplied) and to transmit by way of a spontaneous exchange of information under Article 9 of Council Directive 2011/16/EU to the tax authorities of all other member states details of residents of those states advertising through the platform; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25629/18]

245. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Finance the number of times the Revenue Commissioners provided spontaneous exchanges of information under Article 9 of Council Directive 2011/16/EU to the tax authorities of other member states in 2017 and in the first five months of 2018; the number of persons concerned by country; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25630/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 241 to 245, inclusive, together.

The Deputy will be aware that Revenue is independent in the operation of its function and

Questions - Written Answers

this independence has been statutorily confirmed in Section 101 of the *Ministers and Secretaries (Amendment) Act, 2011*. Accordingly, neither I, nor any Minister for Finance, can or should direct or request any intervention on any specified individual or company as set out by the Deputy in her questions.

I am informed by Revenue that, under Irish legislation, Revenue may spontaneously exchange information in their possession with other Member States if they consider that this information may be useful to those other Member States. However they are not empowered to initiate enquiries (including audits) into, or address enquiries to, a person in order to acquire information on that person's liability to tax, or any other person's liability to tax, in any other Member State unless they are requested to do so by another Member State.

I have also been informed by Revenue that exchange of information carried out under the provisions of *Council Directive 2011/16/EU on Administrative Cooperation in the Field of Taxation* ("the Directive") is governed by strict confidentiality provisions and the details of any specific requests or exchanges that have taken place in relation to individual companies or between Ireland and specific Member States cannot be disclosed.

Revenue has provided the following broad information in relation to exchange of information under the Directive.

Ireland spontaneously sent information to other Member States under the Directive

2017 - 4 exchanges

2018 - none (to 31 May)

Requests for information received by Ireland from other Member States under the Directive

2017 - 159 requests received

2018 - 50 requests received (to 31 May)

Automatic exchanges of specific data under the Directive

The following categories of information were sent to other Member States under the Directive.

Category	Number of records exchanged relating to 2014	Number of records exchanged relating to 2015
Directors Fees	1,763	1,764
Income from Employment	1,564	2,045
Immovable Properties	21,892	21,932
Pensions	162	361
Total	25,381	26,102

The information exchanged is obtained from tax returns which are filed a period of time after the year-end. Records relating to 2014 were exchanged during 2016 and records relating to 2015 were exchanged during 2017. The records relating to 2016 are scheduled to be exchanged the week of 18 June 2018.

Revenue Commissioners Data

246. Deputy Joan Burton asked the Minister for Finance the number of notifications received by the Revenue Commissioners from other tax authorities of recipients of pensions from other EU member states resident here in 2017 and to date in 2018 under headings (details supplied) by country, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25631/18]

247. Deputy Joan Burton asked the Minister for Finance the number of taxpayers that declared foreign social security pensions, foreign occupational pensions or other foreign pensions in their tax returns in each of the years 2013 to 2016, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25632/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 246 and 247 together.

Regarding Question 25631/18, Revenue has advised me that the requested data is not available as the relevant tax returns for 2017 and 2018 are not yet due.

Regarding Question 25632/18, the table below sets out the number of taxpayers that have declared 'Foreign State Pension' or 'Foreign Other Pension' in their tax returns for the years 2013 to 2015, the latest years for which data are available. In situations where taxpayers have opted for joint assessment, for example married couples or those in a civil partnership, the information is included only once in the table.

Revenue has also advised me that due to the manner in which returns are filed, it is not possible to separately identify foreign occupational pensions from all other foreign non-social security pensions.

Year	'Foreign State Pension'	'Foreign Other Pension'
2015	19,370	9,660
2014	18,755	9,549
2013	17,105	9,164

Brexit Issues

248. Deputy Joan Burton asked the Minister for Finance the number of additional customs officers that will be required to deal with the issues arising from the UK's imminent departure from the EU; the number that have been recruited to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25633/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am advised by Revenue that they are actively engaged in examining the range of scenarios that may apply post-Brexit. The nature of the future trading relationship, which is subject to negotiation between the EU and the UK, will determine the nature of the controls to be applied and the number of additional customs officers that will be needed. For this reason Revenue's focus to date has centred on upgrading their IT systems in order to have the most advanced systems possible and to maximise the simplifications provided for within the Union Customs Code.

This preparatory work is being undertaken by approximately 25 full time equivalents of staff, of whom, 12 are dedicated to Brexit work full time, supported by additional staff throughout the organisation as required.

Questions - Written Answers
Customs and Excise Staff

249. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Finance if the Revenue Commissioners considered the need to arm customs officers that will be stationed on the land border with the United Kingdom when the UK leaves the EU; his views on the implied threat from certain politicians in the UK and Northern Ireland to customs posts and by implication to Irish customs officers; and his further views on whether the arming of customs officers for their own safety may be necessary; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25634/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The European Union and the United Kingdom share the objective of avoiding a hard border on the island of Ireland.

Concrete commitments with a view to achieving this objective were agreed and set out in the Joint Report on Progress in December 2017 and have since been transposed into legal terms in the draft Protocol on Ireland and Northern Ireland, which is an integral part of the Withdrawal Agreement.

Ireland's strong preference remains an overall EU-UK future relationship which would resolve all issues. However it remains vital that a legally-binding backstop is agreed to provide certainty that, in any circumstances, a hard border will be avoided.

The EU has been clear that the backstop is an essential element of the EU-UK withdrawal agreement and that negotiations can only progress as long as all commitments undertaken so far are respected in full.

Ireland and the Commission have both stressed that substantial progress on the backstop is needed before the June European Council. Based on the negotiations between the UK and the Commission Taskforce in the coming days and weeks, Michel Barnier will make an assessment of progress, for consideration by the Taoiseach and his counterparts at the European Council three weeks from now.

In this regard, the recent presentation by the UK of written proposals aimed at making progress in the Brexit negotiations is welcomed. The Commission will make a first assessment of the technical and legal feasibility of the proposals, and whether they provide a basis for negotiation. We look forward to its assessment and to discussing whether the proposals could be helpful in meeting the UK's repeated commitment to avoiding a hard border, and thereby making progress on the backstop on Ireland and Northern Ireland.

In terms of security and safety, An Garda Síochána is responsible for the security of the State and any issues relating to the safety and security of Customs Officers or Customs facilities are addressed to that organisation.

Help-To-Buy Scheme Eligibility

250. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Finance if there are provisions or exemptions whereby persons that had a share in a house previously and have since been divorced and are now seeking to buy a first-time house on their own can be included in the help-to-buy scheme; if these criteria are consistent with the Rebuilding Ireland home loan scheme in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25644/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am advised by Revenue that the definition of a first-time purchaser for the purposes of the Help to Buy (HTB) scheme is "an individual who, at the time of a claim for HTB has not, either individually or jointly with any other

person, previously purchased or previously built, directly or indirectly, on his or her own behalf a dwelling”.

It is not clear what the Deputy means when he refers to “a share in a house”.

For example, take a married couple or co-habitants. A dwelling could have been bought by one of the parties only, and used as a family home. If at some later stage the relationship broke down, it is possible that the individual who had not bought the house may seek to purchase a house. If that individual proves that he/she was not previously involved in the purchase of a house, then that person could, subject to satisfying the conditions of the scheme, be a first-time purchaser for the purposes of the HTB.

If however, what is meant by “a share in a house” is that a person was a joint owner of a dwelling that they formerly purchased or built, then he/she would not qualify as a first time buyer for the purposes of HTB.

In relation to the Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan, that scheme is within the remit of the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government and its features are matters for him to decide.

Property Tax Yield

251. Deputy Seán Haughey asked the Minister for Finance the estimated additional revenue that would be generated if the local property tax rate of 0.25% was increased to 0.40% for houses valued at over €1 million; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25665/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): For properties valued over €1 million, Local Property Tax (LPT) is assessed at 0.18% on the first €1 million and 0.25% on the portion valued above €1 million. I am informed by Revenue that such properties yielded approximately €10 million in LPT receipts in 2017.

I am further advised by Revenue that the LPT yield, from increasing the current 0.25% rate on the excess over €1 million to 0.4%, is estimated at approximately €2 million.

Government Bonds

252. Deputy Michael McGrath asked the Minister for Finance the value of assets purchased each year from Irish financial institutions by either the Central Bank or other eurozone central banks, including the European Central Bank, as part of the European Central Bank, ECB, asset purchase programme; the value of those assets that were Irish Government bonds; the value of Irish Government bonds held by the Central Bank or other eurozone central banks as part of the ECB asset purchase programme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25713/18]

253. Deputy Michael McGrath asked the Minister for Finance the value of Irish bank bonds purchased each year by the Central Bank or other eurozone central banks, including the European Central Bank, ECB, as part of the ECB’s asset purchase programme; the value of those Irish bank bonds held on the balance sheets of the Central Bank and other eurozone central banks as part of the ECB’s asset purchase programme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25714/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 252

and 253 together.

Data on asset purchases from Irish financial institutions as part of the ECB Asset Purchase Programme (APP) is not available publicly.

The market value of Irish government bonds held on the Central Bank of Ireland balance sheet at the end of 2017 was €21,813 million (*Source: Central Bank Annual Report 2017, p.193, available: <https://www.centralbank.ie/publication/corporate-reports/annual-reports>*)

The ECB has also purchased Irish government bonds as part of Asset Purchase Programme but data on its holdings of Irish government bonds is not publicly available.

Where the Deputy references the value of “Irish bank bonds”, it is assumed that the question refers to Irish covered bonds purchased under the Third Covered Bond Purchase Programme (CBPP3), the latter being a component of the APP. In this context, the breakdown of Irish covered bonds purchased under the APP is not publicly available

The CBPP3 commenced in October 2014. The market value of covered bonds held on the Central Bank of Ireland’s balance sheet as at the end of 2014 was €499 million; €2,193 million at year-end 2015; €3,210 million as at the end of 2016; and €3.596 million as at the end of 2017. It is important to note that incorporated within these numbers are purchases of non-Irish covered bonds. (*Source: Central Bank of Ireland Annual Reports 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, available:*

<https://www.centralbank.ie/publication/corporate-reports/annual-reports>).

Fiscal Policy

254. Deputy Michael McGrath asked the Minister for Finance if consultation has taken place with the European Commission in relation to the rules regarding the statistical treatment of the rainy day fund; if a decision has been made by the Commission in that regard; if a decision by the Commission is imminent in that regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25715/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): It has not been necessary to consult with the European Commission in relation to the statistical treatment of the Rainy Day Fund, as no decision is required from them. The Commission is well aware of, and supportive of, our plans to establish a Rainy Day Fund. They were updated on progress on establishing the Fund in the Stability Programme Update in April and at bilateral meetings.

Any eventual drawdown from the Fund will have to be in accordance with the fiscal rules and the flexibilities that exist therein.

I look forward to discussing our legislative proposals in Committee in the near future, and to publishing the Bill within a short time thereafter.

State Claims Agency Data

255. Deputy Michael McGrath asked the Minister for Finance the number and value of medical claims settled by the State Claims Agency in each year since 2010 whereby the claim was either fully or partially recouped by the agency from professional indemnity for individual clinicians; the value recouped in each year since 2010 from professional indemnity for indi-

vidual clinicians; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25717/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am informed by the State Claims Agency (SCA) that as of 11th June 2018, the figures below show cost recoveries and third party payments for clinical claims finalised from 2010 to 2018 year to date.

Table 1 is correct as of 11/06/2018, whereby recoveries refer to money recouped by the SCA from the “Medical Protection Society” or the “Medical Defence Unit”.

Year Claim Finalised	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018 YTD	Total
Total Paid (€)	€471,519	€406,573	€3,512,102	€8,814,504	€592,958	€2,126,530	€1,787,922	€1,434,045	€366,929	€19,513,082
Recovered (€)	€221,595	€277,721	€1,281,598	€2,864,582	€7,976	€664,500	€268,050	€247,901	€84,259	€5,918,181
Number of claims	4	2	3	9	2	3	7	2	2	34

Figures in respect of paid totals relate to the amount of money paid on a claim over its lifetime. This may include payments made in previous years. It includes damages, legal costs and other expert costs. The year a claim is finalised refers to when a claim and all other matters associated with it have been agreed e.g. costs. There may still be some associated payments and reimbursements outstanding on finalised claims.

Public Appointments Service

256. Deputy Eamon Scanlon asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the response to the clerical officer competition on publicjobs.ie earlier in 2018; the number of positions filled from the panel; the position of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24238/18]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As the Deputy will be aware, The Public Appointments Service (PAS) is an independent statutory recruitment body for the Civil Service and they have advised me that they do not comment on individual cases to third parties. Each application is treated as strictly confidential.

PAS has advised me that the individual concerned should contact them directly at the following email address: clearance@publicjobs.ie.

PAS has also informed me that 4 people have been assigned from the CO 2018 panel to date.

Office of Public Works Properties

257. Deputy Charlie McConalogue asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the engagement the Office of Public Works has had regarding a building (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24252/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran) (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran): The 2012 and 2013 Policing Plans for An Garda Síochána identified 139 Garda stations for closure. Many of these properties reverted to the Office of Public Works (OPW) to identify an alternative State use or manage their disposal.

In 2016, An Garda Síochána/Policing Authority undertook a review of the closed Garda stations under the Programme for a Partnership Government. In late 2017, the preliminary review

initially identified six stations for re-opening. These were:

Ballinspittle, Co. Cork

Bawnboy, Co. Cavan

Leighlinbridge, Co. Carlow

Donard, Co. Wicklow

Stepaside, Co. Dublin

Rush, Co. Dublin.

The Programme for a Partnership Government also commits to requesting the Policing Authority to oversee a review of ‘both the boundaries of Garda districts and the dispersement of Garda stations in rural areas and in developing urban and suburban areas with a view to ensuring both an efficient and optimum geographical distribution of stations’. In this regard, the Acting Garda Commissioner has requested the OPW not to dispose of any additional former Garda stations, including the former Garda station at Cloghan, Co. Donegal.

An OPW official did meet with members of Donegal Mountain Rescue to discuss their interest in acquiring the former Garda station at Cloghan and they are aware that any decision to dispose or transfer the former Garda station in Cloghan, Co. Donegal is on hold pending the recommendations arising from the proposed review.

Garda Stations

258. Deputy Niamh Smyth asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the status of works for a Garda station (details supplied); the completion date for same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24521/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran) (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran): As I previously advised the House in response to a similar question on Wednesday, 30th May, 2018, the Office of Public Works is finalising planning documentation and a Part 9 planning application will be lodged in the coming weeks. Once the planning process has been completed the OPW will then undertake the required Public Procurement Process for construction works.

EU Funding

259. Deputy Micheál Martin asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he has spoken to his other EU colleagues regarding the EU cohesion funds recently. [24566/18]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am engaged in regular and ongoing dialogue with my EU ministerial counterparts both at EU meetings and on a bilateral basis.

Minister of State Patrick O’Donovan represented Ireland at both of the recent General Affairs Council (Cohesion) meetings, in November of 2017 and April 2018. On both occasions he also took the opportunity to arrange bilateral Ministerial meetings.

In November 2017 I published an Irish position paper on Cohesion Funding post 2020. This

was circulated to all other EU Member States. We have actively engaged in dialogue at various levels with other Member States on this document and on the position of other Member States.

As the Deputy will be aware, the Commission published their Cohesion Policy Legislative package for the 2021–2027 programming period on Tuesday, 29 May. This followed on from the Multi-annual Financial Framework (MFF) published on 2 May 2018. Both proposals are very detailed and will require careful examination by a number of Government Departments. It is very early in the process, but Ireland will continue to engage constructively with our European partners on these proposals at all levels, including both at senior official and at political level, as appropriate.

Public Procurement Contracts

260. Deputy Danny Healy-Rae asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform his views on whether the inflexibility of State contracts in the face of substantial increases in input costs means construction companies may now be forced out of business or to abandon ongoing public sector projects. [24774/18]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): All public works projects that are delivered under the Exchequer-funded element of the Government's capital plan must be procured in accordance with the provisions laid down in the Capital Works Management Framework (CWMF). The CWMF is mandated by circular and was developed to assist contracting authorities in meeting their ongoing procurement requirements. It provides an integrated set of contractual provisions, guidance material, technical templates and procedures which cover all aspects of the delivery process of a public works project from inception to final project delivery and review.

The conditions of the public works contracts which are used for the delivery of the majority of building and civil engineering projects are fixed price, lump sum contracts. This requirement is key to ensuring greater cost certainty in the delivery of the public capital programme. When tendering public works contracts, contractors are expected to take account of cost increases due to inflation on the primary inputs up to the project's completion. On projects with long delivery programmes, an adjustment to the contract sum for inflation is possible but only after the pre-determined fixed price period has elapsed.

In order to take cost increases due to inflation into account when pricing a project it is accepted that a degree of foresight is required on the likely increases in the input costs such as labour, materials and plant over the duration of the project.

The primary input costs on construction projects are labour, materials and plant. Increases in the cost of fuel can also impact on certain categories of projects. With regards to labour costs, the Deputy refers to Sectoral Employment Orders (SEOs) which are established in accordance with the Industrial Relations (Amendment) Act 2015. An SEO imposes minimum rates of pay and conditions of employment for specified categories of workers. Employers employing the specified categories of workers must comply with the provisions of an SEO covering the sector in which they are operating.

To date, my colleague, the Minister of State at the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation, has signed into law two SEOs that cover workers in the construction sector: SI 455 of 2017 covering the construction sector on 19 October 2017; and SI 59 of 2018 covering the mechanical engineering building services contracting sector on 6 March 2018.

Whilst it is the case that there were no transitional arrangements introduced when the SEOs

were signed into law, nonetheless there was an 11 month process leading up to the establishment of the first SEO in October 2017.

In November 2016 an application was made to the Labour Court by the Construction Industry Federation (CIF) to commence the process. As a body who represents significant numbers of employers in the construction sector it must be presumed that this application was made with the knowledge of its members. An invitation for submissions by interested parties was published by the Labour Court in February 2017. This was followed by an invitation from the Labour Court to an oral hearing on 26 June 2017 to those who made submissions. The CIF, having made a submission was one of the bodies invited to the hearing. Having concluded its deliberations, the Labour Court issued a recommendation to the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation on 13 July 2017 which was published shortly thereafter. The Minister, having accepted the recommendation, submitted a draft order to both Houses of the Oireachtas and it was signed into law on 19 October 2017 after a resolution approving it had been passed by each House.

Wages in this sector have experienced increases in recent years as evidenced by average increases of 6% year on year in the biannual tender price index published by the Society of Chartered Surveyors in Ireland since 2014. The foregoing would suggest that contractors should have been taking wage inflation into account when tendering for construction contracts; public or private. Indeed the SCSI tender price index would suggest that contractors have been taking wage inflation into account in pricing work.

I have received several representations on behalf of contractors operating under the public works contracts. The correspondence has identified the difficulties being experienced by those contractors whose tender prices did not account for the increased cost of labour represented by the introduction of the SEOs.

The conditions of the public works contract have been in general use since 2007 and industry is well aware of their fixed price requirement. It must be assumed therefore that this issue has arisen due to a lack of awareness of the process that was being undertaken and this is something that I will bring to the attention of my colleague, the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation.

Pension Provisions

261. Deputy Mary Butler asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the status of the outstanding claim by community employment supervisors and assistant supervisors on their pension ex gratia claim; the progress being made on the matter; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24975/18]

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.

Departmental Properties

262. Deputy Mary Lou McDonald asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the annual rental cost for the Dublin Passport Office building in 2016, 2017 and to date in 2018, in tabular form. [25154/18]

263. Deputy Mary Lou McDonald asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the annual rental cost for the Cork Passport Office building in 2016, 2017 and to date in 2018, in tabular form. [25158/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran) (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran): I propose to take Questions Nos. 262 and 263 together.

As requested, the following table sets out the annual rent for the Passport Offices in Dublin and Cork. A cut-off date of 6th June was used when calculating the 2018 to date rental liability.

DFAT

Passport Offices Annual Rent

Property	2016	2017	2018 (01/01/2018 to 06/06/2018)
Passport Office 1 – Balbriggan	€390,000	€390,000	€169,088.16 paid to date
Passport Office 2 – Balbriggan	€99,417.50	€99,417.50	€43,103.17 paid to date
Passport Office Molesworth Street, Dublin 2	01/01/2016-15/04/2016 = €196,859.42	NIL	NIL
Passport Office, Cork	€290,097.52	€290,097.52	€53,250.77 paid to date

**The Dublin Passport office moved to a State owned building in April 2016*

Flood Prevention Measures

264. Deputy Peter Burke asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if river levels at a location (details supplied) will be investigated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24267/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran) (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran): Water levels in Lough Allen and Lough Ree are regulated by the ESB. The ESB advises me that the levels are relatively low at present, as of 6th June 2018.

Consultation with ESB confirms that the weir at Athlone is primarily designed to maintain minimum levels in Lough Ree. Waterways Ireland is responsible for the operation of sluice structures in weirs at Tarmonbarry and three other locations under the direction of ESB. The current level is as required by ESB to maintain services and to ensure enough water to provide for the minimum flow required for environmental purposes.

From April 1st 2013 ESB, in conjunction with Waterways Ireland, has been applying a trial protocol to reduce the minimum target level in Lough Ree during summer periods at the request of OPW. Prior to this trial the minimum target level in Lough Ree was 37.65m O.D. at the end of June. As a result of the trial the minimum target level is now 37.55m O.D. on June 30th. As of 6th June 2018, the level in Lough Ree is at 37.64m O.D. Based on the current weather forecast and with 4 sluices open at Athlone Weir the level in Lough Ree is expected to approach 37.60m O.D. by mid-June. Achieving the minimum target level of 37.55m O.D. by end of June

is weather dependent.

Public Procurement Contracts

265. Deputy Billy Kelleher asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform further to the introduction of the new sectoral employment order, SEO, for the construction sector on 19 October 2017, if State contracts signed by companies following a successful public tender award in which the previous SEO was in place and the project costs built into such contracts as a result have to be re-examined following the new SEO; if changes to labour rates of pay are now applicable; if his Department has been contacted by companies in this regard; and the impact this may have on small businesses. [24333/18]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Sectoral Employment Orders (SEOs) are established in accordance with the Industrial Relations (Amendment) Act 2015 (the Act). An SEO imposes minimum rates of pay and conditions of employment for specified categories of workers. Employers employing the specified categories of workers must comply with the provisions of an SEO covering the sector in which they are operating.

Registered Employment Agreements were the previous means of establishing minimum rates of pay and conditions of employment in certain economic sectors. The manner in which these agreements were registered was struck down by the Supreme Court in 2013 leaving the National Minimum Wage as the only wage rate enforceable by statute.

To date, my colleague the Minister of State at the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation has signed into law two SEOs that cover workers in the construction sector: SI 455 of 2017 covering the construction sector on 19 October 2017; and SI 59 of 2018 covering the mechanical engineering building services contracting sector on 6 March 2018.

All public works projects that are delivered under the Exchequer-funded element of the Government's capital plan must be procured in accordance with the provisions laid down in the Capital Works Management Framework (CWMF). The CWMF is mandated by circular and was developed to assist contracting authorities in meeting their ongoing procurement requirements. It provides an integrated set of contractual provisions, guidance material, technical templates and procedures which cover all aspects of the delivery process of a public works project from inception to final project delivery and review.

The conditions of the public works contracts which are used for the delivery of the majority of building and civil engineering projects are fixed price, lump sum contracts. This requirement is key to ensuring greater cost certainty in the delivery of the public capital programme. When tendering public works contracts, contractors are expected to take account of cost increases due to inflation up to the project's completion. On projects with long delivery programmes, an adjustment to the contract sum for inflation is possible but only after the pre-determined fixed price period has elapsed.

In order to take cost increases due to inflation into account when pricing a project it is accepted that a degree of foresight is required on the likely increases in the input costs such as labour, materials and plant over the duration of the project.

Whilst it is the case that there were no transitional arrangements introduced when the SEOs were signed into law, nonetheless there was an 11 month process leading up to the establishment of the first SEO in October 2017.

In November 2016 an application was made to the Labour Court by the Construction Industry Federation (CIF) to commence the process. As a body who represents significant numbers of employers in the construction sector it must be presumed that this application was made with the knowledge of its members. An invitation for submissions by interested parties was published by the Labour Court in February 2017. This was followed by an invitation from the Labour Court to an oral hearing on 26 June 2017 to those who made submissions. Having concluded its deliberations, the Labour Court issued a recommendation to the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation on the 13 July 2017 which was published shortly thereafter and was picked up in various national media outlets. The Minister, having accepted the recommendation, submitted a draft order to both Houses of the Oireachtas and it was signed into law on 19 October 2017 after a resolution approving it had been passed by each House.

Wages in this sector have experienced increases in recent years as evidenced by average increases of 6% year on year in the biannual tender price index published by the Society of Chartered Surveyors in Ireland since 2014. The foregoing would suggest that contractors should have been taking wage inflation into account when tendering for construction contracts; public or private. Indeed the SCSI tender price index would suggest that contractors have been taking wage inflation into account in pricing work.

Circular 08/2018 was issued on 24 May 2018 through the Office of Government Procurement (OGP) which sets out the amendments that have been undertaken to the CWMF to reflect the introduction of the SEOs in the construction sector. These amendments will apply to tenders and contracts that are commenced after the periods set out in the circular and do not change the fixed price nature of the contracts.

I have received representations from the CIF, fellow Ministers and Deputies on behalf of contractors operating under the public works contracts. The correspondence has identified the difficulties being experienced by those contractors whose tender prices did not account for the increased cost of labour represented by the introduction of the SEOs.

The conditions of the public works contract have been in general use since 2007 and industry is well aware of the fixed price requirement. It must be assumed therefore that this issue has arisen due to a lack of awareness of the process that was being undertaken and this is something that I will bring to the attention of my colleague the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation.

Public Sector Pensions Data

266. Deputy Bríd Smith asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the number of public and civil service workers whose pension entitlements are subject to convergence criteria, that is, whose workplace pensions are reduced when they reach the State retirement age. [24432/18]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The authorities responsible for the administration of the large number of pension schemes operating in the various sectors of the Irish public service are, in general, the relevant employers and Ministers in those sectors.

It would be a matter for those sectoral authorities, including relevant Ministers, to supply such information as may be available in respect of the pension entitlements of members of those individual pension schemes.

I and my Department are responsible for the civil service pension schemes, which cover

personnel in established and unestablished civil service and State Industrial posts.

In this response I am interpreting the reference to convergence to mean those pensions which are integrated with the State Pension (Contributory).

As at 31 December 2017, approximately 15,000 civil service workers have pension entitlements which are subject to integration and whose overall pension takes account of the State Pension (Contributory).

These members would be eligible to receive the State Pension (Contributory), based on a member's PRSI record.

Public Sector Pensions Data

267. Deputy Bríd Smith asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the amount by which public and civil service workers' pensions subject to convergence have been reduced in each of the years since 2010. [24433/18]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The authorities responsible for the administration of the large number of pension schemes operating in the various sectors of the Irish public service are, in general, the relevant employers and Ministers in those sectors.

It would be a matter for those sectoral authorities, including relevant Ministers, to supply such information as may be available in respect of the pension entitlements of members of those individual pension schemes.

I and my Department are responsible for the civil service pension schemes, which cover personnel in established and unestablished civil service and State Industrial posts.

In this response I am interpreting the reference to convergence to mean those pensions which are integrated with the State Pension (Contributory) and the reference to reduction to relate to the effects of integration.

As regards the detailed information sought, it should be noted that, once a pension is calculated and comes into payment, a breakdown of the various components upon which that pension is based is not retained centrally nor readily available. It would take an inordinate amount of official time and effort to obtain the information sought as it would necessitate examination of the files of all retirees in the period concerned.

Legislative Programme

268. Deputy Maurice Quinlivan asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the status of the public service superannuation (miscellaneous provisions) (amendment) Bill; when it will be published and introduced; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24451/18]

275. Deputy Willie Penrose asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform when legislation which will permit persons in the public service that have reached retirement age to continue working and accrue benefits will be brought before Dáil Éireann; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24991/18]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to

take Questions Nos. 268 and 275 together.

As the Deputies are aware, on 5 December 2017, the Government agreed that the compulsory retirement age of most public servants recruited before 1 April 2004 should be increased to age 70. Primary legislation is required for this change to be implemented. The Government has approved the General Scheme of a Bill to give effect to its decision and I asked the Attorney General to prioritise the drafting of this legislation so that the new compulsory retirement age will become effective as soon as possible. The drafting process is currently under way and the Bill is on the list of priority legislation for publication in the current session. The drafting of the legislation is significantly advanced with an expected publication date, subject to Government approval in the coming weeks.

Deputies will appreciate that it is not possible to determine the length of time it will take for the Bill to be drafted and pass through both Houses of the Oireachtas, given the need for meticulous drafting, ongoing detailed policy considerations, and the scheduling requirements of the Houses of the Oireachtas. The Bill is being treated as a priority and my intention is to bring forward the necessary legislation as soon as possible.

In order to make some accommodation for public servants who reach the age of 65 in the period between the Government Decision of 5 December and the commencement of the necessary legislation, the Government approved some limited interim arrangements which became effective from the date of the Government Decision. The interim arrangements (which have to respect the current statutory position of the compulsory retirement age of 65) will, through retire and re-hire, enable pre-2004 public servants who reach the age of 65 to remain in employment until they reach the age of eligibility for the State Pension (Contributory), which is currently 66, should they wish to do so. Details of these interim implementation arrangements have been put in place by the relevant sectors.

Programme for Government Implementation

269. Deputy Micheál Martin asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the status of the implementation of the programme for partnership Government as it applies to his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24580/18]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Deputy may wish to note that the latest Annual Report on the implementation of the Programme for Partnership Government will be published by the Department of the Taoiseach shortly. This will provide comprehensive detail on the latest position on the implementation of the programme across the whole of Government. In terms of my own Department, some areas of particular focus include the following:

- Our Public Service 2020 was published in December 2017 and sets out a new framework for public service reform. Its actions will build a stronger public service and deliver better quality services over the period 2018 to 2020 and beyond. Implementation of these actions is well underway.

- The Public Service Stability Agreement 2018-2020, which extends the Lansdowne Road Agreement, has been ratified by all parties and is now in place. The Public Service Pay and Pensions Act 2017 was passed in December 2017 to give effect to its terms.

- Following on from the first round of the three year Spending Review, which saw the publication of 22 papers, the second round is progressing.

- The policy paper ‘Equality Budgeting: Proposed Next Steps in Ireland’ sets out the pilot approach that is currently progressing for equality budgeting in the 2018 budgetary cycle. Learnings from the pilot, supported by an expert advisory group, will expand the initiative for the next budgetary cycle.

- The 10 year National Development Plan commits to €91 billion of Exchequer capital investment over the period of the Plan (2018-2027), bringing public capital investment levels in Ireland as a % of national income to amongst the highest in the EU.

- The PEACE and INTERREG programmes have been a key element of the EU’s continuing commitment to the process of peace building and reconciliation and support for the Good Friday Agreement. A key priority of the PEACE IV programme is Shared Education to bring together school children and teachers from different communities and backgrounds. Projects have also been designed to help people live, learn and socialise with each other free from prejudice and hate.

Further details on the implementation of these and other priorities from the Programme for Partnership Government will be included in the upcoming Annual Report.

Flood Relief Schemes

270. Deputy Joe Carey asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the position in relation to a flood protection scheme (details supplied) in County Clare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24595/18]

271. Deputy Joe Carey asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the position in relation to a flood protection scheme (details supplied) in County Clare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24596/18]

272. Deputy Joe Carey asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the position in relation to a flood protection scheme (details supplied) in County Clare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24597/18]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 270 to 272, inclusive, together.

I am advised that in July 2017 the Commissioners of Public Works approved funding of €36,000 to Clare County Council (CCC) under the Office of Public Works (OPW) Minor Flood Mitigation Works and Coastal Protection scheme for the engagement of engineering consultants to progress the detailed design of a project at Cloughaninchy Co. Clare. The Council has indicated that planning approval has been received for the project under the Planning and Development Regulations 2001-2010 and the Council intends now to progress the project to construction.

With regard to Liscannor Bay, I am advised that a Coastal Erosion and Flood Risk Management Study report on Liscannor Bay has been submitted to the OPW by Clare County Council and is currently being reviewed by the OPW who will revert as soon as possible.

Following a review by the OPW of Coastal Erosion and Flood Risk Management Studies submitted by Clare County Council in connection with Whitestrand Milltown Malbay, a meeting took place recently between the OPW and the Council where the reports were discussed. The Council is currently progressing the issues raised with a view to finalising the reports.

Public Sector Staff Retirements

273. Deputy Seán Canney asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the number of public servants who will reach retirement age before the end of 2022, by profession; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24631/18]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The authorities responsible for the administration of the large number of pension schemes operating in the various sectors of the Irish public service are, in general, the relevant employers and Ministers in those sectors.

It would be a matter for those sectorial authorities, including relevant Ministers, to supply such information as may be available in respect of projected retiree numbers of those individual pension schemes.

I and my Department are responsible for the civil service pension schemes, which cover personnel in established and unestablished civil service and State Industrial posts.

Established staff who joined the civil service before 2004 can choose to retire having reached minimum voluntary retirement age (age 60 generally, or age 50 in the case of Prison Officers with 30 years service). By its nature, it is difficult to predict the level of retirements in any one year. A forecast of numbers of staff reaching the minimum retirement age of 60 shows that the demographics are such that the numbers eligible to retire will rise until at least 2021. Details of the forecast are outlined below.

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Projected numbers who will reach retirement age (60)	1,053	1,112	1,413	1,775	1,754

Information on the professions of retirees is not held centrally by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

Public Sector Staff Retirements

274. Deputy Seán Canney asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the number of public servants who have retired in each year since 2007; the professional occupation of each at the time of retirement; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24632/18]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The authorities responsible for the administration of the large number of pension schemes operating in the various sectors of the Irish public service are, in general, the relevant employers and Ministers in those sectors.

It would be a matter for those sectorial authorities, including relevant Ministers, to supply such information as may be available in respect of the number of retirees in each year to those individual pension schemes.

I and my Department are responsible for the civil service pension schemes, which cover personnel in established and unestablished civil service and State Industrial posts.

Questions - Written Answers

There have been 14,489 retirements from the civil service since 2007. The retirements are broken out by year in the following table.

Year	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	TO-TAL
No. of retirees	830	840	2,191	1,260	1,070	1,846	852	1,301	1,363	1,457	1,479	14,489

Issues with the recording of historical data means that the professional occupation of each retiree is not readily available.

Question No. 275 answered with Question No. 268.

EU Data

276. Deputy Michael McGrath asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the EU fines paid in each of the years 2015 to 2017, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25034/18]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I can confirm for the Deputy that the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform has not paid EU fines in any of the years 2015 to 2017.

I understand that this question has also been forwarded to other Government Departments. They will reply to the Deputy separately in respect of their own remit.

Office of Public Works Properties

277. Deputy Ruth Coppinger asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the number of residential properties owned by the Office of Public Works in the Phoenix Park that are vacant; the plans of the OPW to have such properties occupied; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25136/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran): The Commissioners of Public Works, on behalf of the State, manage a large and diverse property portfolio of over 2,500 properties. These range from office accommodation to heritage properties, visitor centres, Garda stations, among others.

In addition, there are a limited number of sundry residential dwellings that are intrinsic to the estates of parks and gardens as part of our National Historic Properties managed by the Office of Public Works. In general, these are allocated to staff in specific posts, such as Park Superintendents, Deer Keepers, etc. where there is a requirement for them to be present on the ground.

There are 7 such dwellings in the Phoenix Park that are currently unoccupied, due to the poor condition of the properties. It is hoped that as funds become available the OPW will commence a programme of refurbishment of these properties, at which point a decision on their future use will be considered in line with their particular location as part of the Phoenix Park estate.

Commencement of Legislation

278. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the sections and Parts of all legislation brought forward by his Department in each of the past four years that have yet to be commenced; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25183/18]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): There are no sections or Parts of any legislation brought forward by my Department in the past four years that have yet to be commenced.

Public Sector Pay

279. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform further to Parliamentary Questions Nos. 216 to 219, inclusive, of 29 May 2018, if a matter (details supplied) will be addressed regarding the calculation of the cost of equalising pay. [25191/18]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As set out in the answer to Parliamentary Questions Nos. 216 to 219, inclusive, of 29 May 2018 the estimated €195m-€200m cost is annualised based on an assumed increment date of 1 January to give the full year cost of the measure.

However, individual increment dates vary considerably across the year, with some grades and/or sectors recruiting in cohorts (garda, defence and education) which can considerably skew the data.

In addition salary scales are not consistent across grades and sectors. As a result, the interaction between the number of public servants, their point on scale, increment dates and the actual increment jump has a significant impact on costs.

As a consequence it would be wrong to assume a straight 50/50 split over two years. For example for someone with an increment date of March: 83% of the cost falls in year 1 with the remaining 17% forming a carryover cost in year 2.

Again, as previously stated, the necessary information to provide an estimate of costs associated with a phased implementation is not currently available to my Department.

Since the publication of the report, IGEES economists in my department, in support of the discussions between the parties, have engaged in further work to assess and model the potential budgetary implications and impacts through phasing of the overall quantum.

This work is currently on-going.

Office of Public Works Projects

280. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform when proposed works (details supplied) will be carried out; if the contractor has been contacted and asked to give a date for the proposed works to be done; and, if contact has not been made with the contractor, whether contact will be made with them with immediate effect. [25219/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran): I can confirm that the Office of Public Works (OPW) has appointed a contractor to carry out the maintenance works referred to by the deputy. These works are scheduled to

be completed this week.

Public Sector Staff Retirements

281. Deputy Michael McGrath asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the position in respect of the retirement lump sum for public servants retiring after March 2019; the details of changes in the calculation of the lump sum; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25254/18]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I am taking it that the Deputy is referring to the consequences for the calculation of public service occupational pension benefits of the programmed expiry of the current ‘grace period’ at the end of March 2019 (in fact, the last day of the grace period is 1 April 2019).

The introduction of the ‘grace periods’ under FEMPI was to allow the pay rates that were in force prior to the implementation of pay cuts to be applied when calculating the pension entitlements of employees who were retiring and were affected by those pay cuts. Following the expiry of the first grace period in February 2012, those retiring after that date had their pension entitlements calculated on the basis of their actual final salary on the day of retirement.

The further pay reduction applied to the cohort of public servants earning more than €65,000 in June 2013 has also been subject to a similar grace period. Currently, the lump sum of a retiring public servant in that cohort is calculated on the basis of the pre-2013 pay cut rate of pay (adjusted for the general pay increase of 1% from 1 January 2018 under the Public Service Pay and Pensions Act 2017). Because of the expiration of the grace period and in the context of pay restoration, from 2 April 2019 onwards, pensions and lump sums will again be based on actual pay, not grace-period-protected pay. This will apply equally to individuals who are not at the top point of their pay scale and whose increments were paused under FEMPI 2013; the pension entitlements of such individuals will be calculated based on their current pay point at retirement rather than the pay point they would have been on had the increment pauses not occurred. Accordingly, individuals in that group retiring from 2 April 2019 onwards should have regard to their own particular salary point and current or future pay increments in their retirement planning.

Flood Relief Schemes

282. Deputy Jackie Cahill asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if an official from his Department will be appointed to engage with a person (details supplied) to negotiate an agreement regarding access to their land for flood relief works; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25263/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran): Day to day management of the Templemore flood relief scheme rests with the Office of Public Works (OPW). The OPW has engaged with all landowners and property owners affected by scheme in a constructive and courteous manner at all times. In the case in question the OPW has met with the person on a number of occasions to discuss his concerns and advise him of what is involved in the scheme and what avenues are open to him to address those concerns. The OPW wrote most recently to him on 28th May 2018 and indicated that, if he wished, it was open to him to engage the services of a professional advisor with OPW covering all reasonable costs, or to contact OPW directly to set up a meeting to discuss his concerns further.

As you know, the flood relief scheme will bring enormous benefit to the people and business community of Templemore and the OPW is anxious to maintain progress with the scheme while dealing with all property and landowner concerns in a fair and reasonable manner.

Departmental Funding

283. Deputy Jonathan O'Brien asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform his Department's capital allocation in each of the years 2019 to 2023; and the areas to which funds will be allocated in each of those years. [25576/18]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The purpose of capital investment undertaken by my Department, including the Office of Government Procurement (OGP), is to deliver greater effectiveness and efficiency across the Civil and Public Service. The nature of many of the reform initiatives set out in ambitious reform plans, such as Our Public Service 2020 and the Public Service ICT Strategy, is that up-front investment is sometimes required to deliver service improvements and greater consolidation and efficiency across the Civil and Public Service in the medium and long term. Therefore, this can involve my Department taking on additional costs, including capital costs, in the short-term.

The Department's capital allocation for the years 2019 to 2022 is set out below.

Subhead and Vote	2019 - €m	2020 - €m	2021 - €m	2022 - €m	Total - €m
B.6 OGCIO	5	5	5	5	20
DPER Vote 11 (Total)	5	5	5	5	20
OGP Vote 39	1	1	1	1	4
Overall Departmental Total	6	6	6	6	24

Capital allocations for 2023 will be determined during the Budget 2019 process. The multi-annual Exchequer capital allocations agreed in Budget 2018 under the National Development Plan underpin each Department's capital planning process for a five-year period from 2018 to 2022. These five-year allocations will be reviewed and extended annually on a rolling basis to include a fifth year, as part of the annual Estimates process. This will provide Government with an annual opportunity to review the allocations in light of any implementation issues arising and/or new priorities which may emerge as the National Development Plan is implemented.

The Office of the Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO), which is also part of my Department, invests and develops IT infrastructure on behalf of my Department, the Department of Finance, the National Shared Services Office and the OGP. However, its broader role is to leverage ICT to gain efficiencies and to improve the effectiveness of service delivery across the Civil and Public Service.

The OGCIO takes the lead on driving forward the implementation of the Public Service ICT Strategy, working with Departments and agencies across the Public Service. Capital investment in the period will be allocated to projects that support the five strategic themes of the strategy which are; Build to Share, Digital First, Data as an Enabler, Improve Governance, and Increase Capability. For instance, under the Build to Share pillar of the Strategy, the OGCIO continues to enhance the Government Network that has been in existence for many years. As a result of this investment, the Network will operate at higher speeds, providing high capacity services to the wider Public Service. The enhanced network will support agencies in the roll-out of new applications, new ways of working and engaging with the citizen.

The OGP continues to invest in its IT systems to deliver on its mandate to drive procurement savings to the State. For example, the OGP is continuing to invest in the eTenders platform to support national and EU procurement requirements. A CRM / Workflow Management System is also being implemented to support OGP's Customer Service function and sourcing activities of the OGP and its sector partners.

Expenditure Reviews

284. Deputy Michael McGrath asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the gross voted current expenditure in each year since 2010; the annual percentage increase or decrease in each year; the gross voted capital expenditure in each year since 2010; the annual percentage increase or decrease in each year in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25716/18]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The following table shows the trend in total gross voted expenditure, gross voted current expenditure and gross voted capital expenditure from 2010 to 2018. Figures presented for 2010 – 2016 are based on the Appropriation Accounts, while figures for 2017 are the Provisional Outturn amounts notified by Departments. The 2017 Provisional Outturn does not include any amount in respect of capital carryover spent in 2017. Capital expenditure of €74 million was carried over from 2016 into 2017. 2018 figures presented here are as set out in the 2018 Revised Estimates Volume (REV).

A number of technical adjustments are reflected in the table below. At the beginning of 2015 the HSE Vote was disestablished, with voted funding for the HSE now provided from the Department of Health Vote. As a consequence of this change, certain items, amounting to approximately €1 billion in 2014, previously accounted for as appropriations-in-aid in the HSE Vote are collected directly as income by the HSE and reflected in the HSE accounts. This impacts on the year-on-year change between 2014 and 2015. Adjusting to allow a like-for-like comparison, the year-on-year change between 2014 and 2015 is 2.8% for gross voted expenditure. REV 2018 saw a significant technical adjustment relating to the funding of domestic water services. Following enactment of the Water Services Act 2017 all motor tax receipts are being paid into the Exchequer rather than the Local Government Fund and all State funding for domestic water services is now provided from voted expenditure by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government. This technical change resulted in an increase of €500 million in gross voted capital expenditure and €292 million in gross voted current expenditure in REV 2018 relative to the amounts included in the Budget Estimates for 2018. Excluding this adjustment, the year-on-year increase in gross voted expenditure from 2017 to 2018 on a like-for-like basis would be c. 4%.

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
	€m								
Total Gross Voted Expenditure	60,564	57,362	55,958	54,373	54,098	54,594	55,987	58,525	61,765

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
	€m								
Vari- ance y-o-y (%)	-3.9%	-5.3%	-2.4%	-2.8%	-0.5%	0.9%	2.6%	4.5%	5.5%
Gross Voted Cur- rent	54,179	52,847	52,149	50,986	50,501	50,864	51,775	53,989	55,941
Vari- ance y-o-y (%)	-2.8%	-2.5%	-1.3%	-2.2%	-1.0%	0.7%	1.8%	4.3%	3.6%
Gross Voted Capital	6,385	4,515	3,809	3,387	3,597	3,730	4,212	4,536	5,823
Vari- ance y-o-y (%)	-12.8%	-29.3%	-15.6%	-11.1%	6.2%	3.7%	12.9%	7.7%	28.4%

School Staff

285. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he is in receipt of email correspondence sent to him by a person (details supplied) in County Donegal regarding the issue of release day allocations for teaching principals in addition to the remuneration and workload of such post holders; when the person can expect to receive a response; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24245/18]

286. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if the issue of principal release days and the way they are calculated as expressed in correspondence by a school (details supplied) in County Donegal will be prioritised; if greater resources will be allocated to teachers and schools as part of budget 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24246/18]

440. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a reply will issue to correspondence from a person (details supplied) seeking extra release days; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25718/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 285, 286 and 440 together.

Circular 0040/2018, which is available on my Department's website, outlines the number of days that teaching principals may take as release time in a school year in order to assist them fulfilling their principal duties. Under these arrangements my Department pays for a substitute teacher to be employed by a school to facilitate administrative functions to be undertaken by the teaching principal.

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

principals in the 2018/19 school year depending on the size of the school.

I recently announced an extension to the arrangements for schools with teaching principals to cluster their release days into full-time posts, with one teacher covering the release days of all the schools in the cluster. Up to 50 principal release cluster posts will be put in place for the 2018/19 school year. This measure will assist teaching principals to more effectively plan their release days for the benefit of the school.

Any additional increase in the number of release days will be considered as part of the next annual budgetary process alongside the many other demands from the education sector.

Capitation Grants

287. Deputy Tom Neville asked the Minister for Education and Skills if additional capitation funding will be provided for a school (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24263/18]

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.

My Department recognises the importance of the Minor Works Grant to primary schools. The National Development Plan 2018-2027 signals a gradual ramping up in capital expenditure in the schools sector over the coming years. In that context, and as part of our longer term infrastructural planning, my Department would intend to put the Minor Works Grant on an annual footing and to provide greater certainty to schools on the timing of payment.

Third Level Fees

288. Deputy Joe Carey asked the Minister for Education and Skills when he envisages extending the qualifying criteria for the payment of fees to third level education institutions for returning Irish masters and doctoral students as per the initiative announced by his predecessor on 17 March 2014; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24276/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): As the Deputy may be aware, in order to qualify for funding towards tuition fees, students must be first-time undergraduates, hold inter alia EU/EEA/Swiss nationality in their own right, and have been ordinar-

ily resident in an EU/EEA/Swiss state for at least three of the five years preceding their entry to an approved third level course.

Where undergraduate students do not qualify for free fees they are required to pay fees to the higher education institution at either an ‘EU rate’ or a higher ‘Non-EU rate’.

My Department does not provide free fees or core funding for post-graduate programmes. The announcement mentioned by the Deputy refers to undergraduate students only and therefore the criteria governing the level of tuition fees to be charged in the case of postgraduate study is solely a matter for each of the higher education institutions to determine in accordance with its own criteria as an autonomous body.

Under the terms of the student grant scheme, grant assistance is awarded to students who meet the prescribed conditions of funding, including those relating to nationality, residency, previous academic attainment and means.

The Deputy will be aware that additional funding of €4 million was secured in Budget 2017 to facilitate the reinstatement of full maintenance grants, from September 2017, for the most disadvantaged postgraduate students. A further €3m was secured in Budget 2018.

Postgraduate students who meet the qualifying conditions for the special rate of grant under the Student Grant Scheme for the 2018/19 academic year are eligible for a maintenance grant of up to €5,915; the income threshold for this grant is €23,500. Qualifying postgraduate students may also be eligible to have their tuition fees paid up to a maximum fee limit of €6,270.

Alternatively a postgraduate student may qualify to have a €2,000 contribution made towards the cost of his/her fees. The income threshold for this payment is €31,500. The student grant scheme does not extend to postgraduate courses pursued outside of Ireland.

My Department also provides funding for the Student Assistance Fund (SAF). The fund is available in various publicly funded higher education institutions. The SAF provides financial assistance to students experiencing financial difficulties while attending third level. Students can be assisted towards their rent, childcare costs, transport costs and books/class materials. The SAF is open to full-time registered students on courses of not less than one year’s duration leading to an undergraduate or postgraduate qualification.

Tax relief is available on postgraduate tuition fees paid and details in relation to this relief are available from the Revenue Commissioners.

It is important to recognise that in implementing the free fees scheme, and the student grant scheme, my Department needs to be conscious of the need for consistency in how individuals are treated and also of the potential financial and other policy implications arising from any specific amendments to either scheme.

Defibrillators in Schools Provision

289. Deputy James Browne asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he has met with the Minister for Health to discuss installing defibrillators in schools here; if so, the date the meeting took place; the outcomes arising from the meeting; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24293/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The position is that under the provisions of the Education Act 1998, the Board of Management is the body charged with

the direct governance of a school.

The decision to install a defibrillator is made at local school level and is a matter for the Board of Management of each individual school.

I understand that a National Steering Group on Out of Hospital Cardiac Arrest was established in 2017 and is representative of health professionals, patient groups, healthcare providers and other sectors. It aims to strengthen the chain of survival for cardiac arrest. The report from the group, due in 2018, will provide advice to the HSE and the Department of Health on the most effective ways of improving survival for cardiac arrest including training for cardio-pulmonary resuscitation, building on the Community First Responder Programme and making public access defibrillators more easily accessible in community settings and in schools.

I will carefully consider any findings that may emerge from the work of this Group that are relevant to my Department.

Special Educational Needs Expenditure

290. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the €29 million allocated to special needs as outlined in budget 2018; the amount of the allocation that has been spent; the way in which the funds were spent; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24298/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The allocation referred to by the Deputy is the increase in funding for the Special Needs Assistant (SNA) Scheme in 2018.

My Department's policy is to ensure that every child who is assessed as needing SNA support will receive access to such support. I secured an additional €30 million in Budget 2018 to fund the continued development of the SNA scheme with some 1,010 additional SNA posts being provided for from that funding.

The first tranche, 70 posts, were made available for allocation for the period January to June 2018. I announced last month that a further 800 SNA posts have been made available for allocation for September 2018 with an additional 140 posts expected to be allocated by the end of the year.

The Government now invests €524 million in SNAs annually, as part of a total €1.75 billion investment in special educational needs overall. There will be a total of 15,000 SNAs working in our schools, supporting over 36,000 pupils, by the end of this year.

This increased investment reflects the priority which the Government has put on helping children with special educational needs to fulfil their potential. It also reflects the growing participation of children with special educational needs in the education system and the capacity of our education system to better support their full participation and progression.

Information on the amount of the financial allocation that has been spent will not be available until the end of the current financial year.

Special Educational Needs Expenditure

291. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the €5.5 million allocated to special education teaching posts as outlined in budget 2018; the amount of

the allocation that has been spent; the way in which the funds were spent; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24299/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): In 2018, in the region of €1.75 billion will be invested in Special Education, nearly one fifth of the overall Education budget, and up 43% since 2011.

This funding includes provision for up to 13,400 Special Education Teaching posts in mainstream primary and post primary schools, providing additional teaching support to pupils with special educational needs, and over 1,440 special classes, with over 140 new Special Classes to open for the 2018/19 school year. This compares to 548 special classes in 2011. Almost 1400 teachers are also allocated to special schools.

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

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

Allocations continue to be made to schools, where exceptional circumstances arise, in accordance with the review criteria set at www.ncse.ie.

The actual expenditure on special education teaching posts in 2018 will not be known until financial reporting has been completed at the end of 2018.

School Curriculum

292. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the €5 million allocated to curriculum reform as outlined in budget 2018; the amount of the allocation that has been spent; the way in which the funds were spent; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24300/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Budget 2018 made provision to support my Department's significant programme of curriculum reform, including the roll out of Junior Cycle Reform with Home Economics, History, Music, Geography and Mathematics commencing in September 2018.

€13 million of new and reallocated funding was provided to deliver continued implementation of Junior Cycle reform and delivery of a range of other curriculum reforms in areas such as implementation of the primary language curriculum and, at senior cycle level, politics & society, agricultural science, applied mathematics, physical education and computer science.

As funding is not allocated by my Department on a subject-by-subject basis, exact expenditure figures regarding individual subjects are not available.

Primary

The new Primary Language Curriculum (PLC) for junior infants to second class was implemented in primary schools in September 2016 with a focus on oral language. In the current school year, the focus is on reading and writing. Public consultation on the draft specification for third class to sixth class was recently completed, with a number of other consultation events

held throughout the country.

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) is also currently working on the development of a new Primary Mathematics Curriculum (PMC). This work commenced in November 2014 and currently a public consultation on the draft specification from junior infants to second class is under way. As with the Primary Language Curriculum, this includes the NCCA working with a network of schools to try out aspects of the new specification.

Post-Primary

Implementation of the new Junior Cycle Framework is proceeding. Implementation commenced in September 2014 with the introduction of English, for first year students. Subjects are being introduced on a phased basis up to 2019 and are being supported by a comprehensive CPD programme for teachers. Science and Business Studies were introduced in September 2016, while Irish, Modern Languages and Visual Arts were introduced in September 2017, together with the new Wellbeing area of learning. Home Economics, History, Music, Geography and Mathematics are commencing in September 2018.

At senior cycle, delivery of CPD for schools participating in phase 2 of the new Leaving Certificate Politics and Society subject specification is underway, as well as schools participating in both Phase 1 of Leaving Certificate Computer Science and Physical Education and the Framework for Senior Cycle Physical Education.

Under my Department's Action Plan for Education 2018, a new Leaving Certificate Economics specification will be published, as well as finalised new specifications in Leaving Certificate Art, Applied Mathematics and Classical Studies.

School Staff

293. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the €4.5 million allocated to the reduction in staffing schedule at primary level as outlined in budget 2018; the amount of the allocated amount that has been spent; the way in which the funds were spent; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24301/18]

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

Budget 2018 included a one point improvement in the staffing schedule in primary schools which brings the position to the most favourable ever seen at primary level. An additional 305 posts will be added to the primary School system as a result of this. This measure will further assist all schools at the upper end of their individual respective bands. This budget measure delivers on a commitment made in the Confidence and Supply Agreement and Programme for Government to reduce primary schools class size.

These changes will come into effect in September 2018 for the 2018/19 school year and schools are currently in the process of recruiting these additional teachers.

School Therapy Services

294. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the

€2.5 million allocated to the ten additional national educational psychological services, NEPS, psychologists and new pilot scheme for in school speech and language therapists as outlined in budget 2018; the amount of the allocation that has been spent; the way in which the funds were spent; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24302/18]

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, Children and Youth Affairs, Health, and the Health Service Executive, 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 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 existing HSE funded provision of essential therapy services.

75 schools, including a representative sample of primary, post primary, and special schools will take part in the project. 75 pre-schools will also participate giving 150 settings.

The project is taking place in Community Healthcare Organisation 7 Region of South West Dublin, Kildare and West Wicklow and the schools selected will therefore be from this region.

As part of the programme, 19 speech and language therapists and 12 Occupational Therapists are being recruited by the HSE to work with the 150 schools and pre-schools. The NCSE will also recruit 2 National Co-ordinators to manage the project.

This recruitment process is ongoing and the bulk of expenditure under this project will occur once the posts are in place and salary costs for post holders arise.

€2.25m is being allocated to Phase One of the project in 2018, however, the actual expenditure on the in-school therapy services project in 2018 will not be known until financial reporting has been completed at the end of 2018.

I am also pleased to confirm that provision was made within the Budget 2018 for the employment of an additional 10 psychologist staff within my Department's National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) with effect in the coming academic year.

The recruitment of these staff has already commenced utilising regional panels maintained by the Public Appointments Service (PAS). Arrangements are in hand with the PAS to shortly put in place a new recruitment competition to replenish these panels sufficient to complete this process and to service the ongoing recruitment needs of the NEPS into the future.

The full year cost of this 10 post expansion will be in the region of €0.7m. This will bring the overall complement of NEPS Psychologists to some 194 whole-time equivalents, the highest level since the Service's inception, allowing for a broadening and deepening of the service provided to schools and underpinning my Department's and this Government's commitment to supporting an effective educational psychological service.

DEIS Expenditure

295. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the €1.5 million allocated to delivering equality of opportunity in schools, DEIS, as outlined in budget 2018; the amount of the allocated funding that has been spent; the way in which the funds were spent; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24303/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The additional funding provided in Budget 2018 is supporting the implementation of the various actions contained in DEIS Plan 2017 and the extension of supports to schools new to the DEIS programme. 902 schools now avail of supports under the DEIS programme and from 1st September 2017, 79 new schools were included in DEIS for the first time and a further 30 schools were upgraded from Band 2 to Band 1 status. The increased budgetary allocation is required to fund the various supports available as set out in DEIS Plan 2017, including, additional teaching resources and Home School Community Liaison Coordinators, additional funding to DEIS schools and a greater prioritisation of National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) service to DEIS schools.

The Budget 2018 allocation is also funding the roll out of the Incredible Years and Friends Programmes to DEIS schools as well as the School Excellence Fund – DEIS.

The overall suite of supports available to schools participating in the DEIS programme will improve educational outcomes for pupils at greatest risk of not reaching their full potential by virtue of their socio-economic circumstances. A list of the supports available to DEIS Schools is available on my Department's website at the following link

<https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/DEIS-Delivering-Equality-of-Opportunity-in-Schools-/DEIS-Supporting-Information/Supports-to-DEIS-Schools.html>

School Guidance Counsellors

296. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the €2 million allocated to creating 100 new posts for career guidance and strengthening school leadership as outlined in budget 2018; the amount of the allocation which has been spent; the number of posts that have been created and filled; the way in which the funds spent; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24304/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Following Budget 2018, the equivalent of 100 additional guidance posts have been allocated to our second-level schools with effect from September 2018. The annual cost of restoring these 100 posts is in the region of €6m.

Measures announced by my Department as part of Budgets 2016, 2017 and 2018 mean that 500 of the 600 guidance posts that were withdrawn in Budget 2012, will be restored to schools from September 2018. Schools were advised in early February 2018 in their staffing schedule of their guidance allocation for the 2018/19 school year.

Circular 0040/2018, which is available on my Department's website, outlines the number of days that teaching principals at Primary level may take as release time in a school year in order to assist them fulfilling their principal duties. Under these arrangements my Department pays for a substitute teacher to be employed by a school to facilitate administrative functions to be undertaken by the teaching principal.

Building on measures in previous budgets to enhance school leadership, Budget 2018 made €0.4 million available to fund additional release days for teaching principals in primary schools.

This additional funding will see an increase in the number of release days available to teaching principals in the 2018/19 school year depending on the size of the school.

Also included in circular 40/2018 is an extension to the arrangements for schools with teaching principals to cluster their release days into full-time posts, with one teacher covering the release days of all the schools in the cluster. Up to 50 principal release cluster posts will be put in place for the 2018/19 school year. This measure will assist teaching principals to more effectively plan their release days for the benefit of the school.

Irish Language

297. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the €1 million allocated to the Irish language as outlined in budget 2018; the amount of the allocation that has been spent; the way in which the funds were spent; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24305/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): A budgetary allocation of €2.3m was provided for the implementation of the Policy on Gaeltacht Education in 2018. The estimated expenditure in 2018 on the Policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022 is largely in line with projections.

The projected spend on the Policy in 2019 is dependent on the outcome of the formal 2019 Estimates process, which has not yet commenced in terms of engagement with spending Departments. The parameters for this engagement will be set out in the Summer Economic Statement and the Mid-Year Expenditure Review, to be published over the summer by the Departments of Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform.

Languages Programme

298. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the €4.5 million allocated to foreign languages, STEM school policy and digital learning programmes for schools as outlined in budget 2018; the amount of the allocation that has been spent; the way in which the funds were spent; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24306/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Approximately €1.5m of the €4.5 has been allocated to the Post Primary Languages Initiative (PPLI) to implement the actions assigned to it under Languages Connect, Irelands Foreign Language Strategy 2017 - 2026. In order to put in place the capacity to deliver on actions assigned to PPLI, due process has been followed and 4 additional staff are now being recruited to the PPLI, two of whom commenced work in May. The first PPLI action was an audit of foreign languages provision in post-primary schools and this was completed with minimal cost. An awareness raising campaign on the value of learning foreign languages, languages upskilling courses for teachers, the promotion of language exchanges abroad and an awards scheme for businesses with good practice in relation to foreign languages are among some of the projects currently being planned during 2018. With the need for appropriate resourcing, advance planning and adherence to best practice, funding is only now being drawn down. The only costs to date are one month's salary for two new members of staff and the creation of videos which will be part of the awareness raising campaign. In all about €35,000 has been spent to date from the €1.5m allocation for foreign languages.

€1.5m has been allocated for STEM. This has not yet been drawn down but will be spent

in 2018 on the following:

- STEM clusters
- Promotion of STEM to include Awareness campaign
- Support for STEM to include PDST STEM team

Funds were also allocated to The School Excellence Fund (SEF) – Digital. The funding for the SEF – Digital has not as yet been allocated to the successful schools owing to the fact that the clustered schools are still working on finalising their budget submissions. It is expected that over the next few weeks all budgets will be submitted from the clusters. The submissions will then be reviewed and, when approval has been given by the working group, ICT policy unit will begin processing the payments to each cluster group. The majority of the cluster projects will be up and running at the start of the coming school year.

Creative Ireland Programme

299. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the €1 million allocated to Creative Ireland as outlined in budget 2018; the amount of the allocation that has been spent; the way in which the funds were spent; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24307/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): My Department was allocated €1 million for Creative Ireland in 2018. However, I have been able to secure an increase of €0.25 million, bringing the total allocation to €1.25 million.

All funding from my Department will be allocated towards initiatives in the Creative Youth programme.

To date, my Department has spent €41,000 of the €1.25 million on Creative Schools. 150 primary and post-primary schools across the country will participate in the pilot of Creative Schools and work with artists, creative practitioners and educators to develop their own unique programme of arts and creative work, connecting them to the full range of local and regional cultural resources and opportunities.

In addition, all participating schools will also receive a further range of supports including a once-off grant and training for teachers in the school.

Applications for Creative Schools closed in May and participating schools will be announced shortly. Work will begin in schools in the selected schools in September 2018.

There are seventeen actions identified for 2018/19 under the Creative Youth Plan. These actions are either the expansion of existing pilot initiatives or new programmes being piloted and encompass some of the commitments in the Arts in Education Charter.

Many of these initiatives are due to begin later this year. This includes:

- A Creative Clusters scheme will be piloted under the school excellence fund.

Applications for Creative Clusters are open until 23 June. I encourage all primary and post-primary schools to apply to participate in this initiative. We are looking to include a wide range of schools, with a broad national spread.

- Teacher-Artist Partnership CPD

The primary school CPD initiative, ‘Teacher-Artist Partnership’ was delivered in twenty education centres during the summer as part of Creative Ireland in 2017. This was followed by artist residencies in schools between September and November. This initiative was supported by my Department, the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, and the Arts Council and is operating again in 2018.

- Arts in Junior Cycle

Arts in Junior Cycle embodies the principles and key skills which underpin the new Framework for Junior Cycle and provide teachers with practical, creative methodologies to use in their classroom. This initiative is guided by the principles expressed in the Arts in Education Charter and originated from an Arts Council and Junior Cycle Teachers (JCT) pilot partnership initiative in 2014.

- Local Creative Youth Partnerships will be established on a pilot basis.

Building on the model for Local Arts Education Partnerships contained in the Arts in Education Charter, Local Creative Youth Partnerships will be established to provide support and delivery mechanisms for optimisation of local creativity resources. As part of this, new and existing collaborative youth creativity initiatives across the country, will be able to apply for funding, based on provided guidelines, administered through the ETB network. Successful applicants will be determined by local committees which will consist of a range of representatives from Local Authorities, ETBs, and local arts and community representatives. The concept will be piloted in three ETB areas in 2018.

National Training Fund

300. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the €37 million allocated to the national training fund for the higher education provision of relevance to employers as outlined in budget 2018; the amount of the allocation that has been spent from the national training fund; the way in which the funds were spent; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24308/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan): The purpose of the National Training Fund (NTF) Higher Education provision is to provide skills-related recurrent funding in support of higher-education programmes that are specifically oriented towards meeting labour market needs in identified skills areas.

The HEA provides core grant and “Free Fees” funding to the seven Universities, fourteen Institutes of Technology and three specialist colleges (National College Art and Design, Mary Immaculate College, ST Angela’s College). This funding contributes to education costs for students in these institutions. The NTF funding is allocated through the HEA funding allocation processes, and contributes towards both grant and ‘Free Fees’ costs for students participating on programmes in three identified skills-shortage areas, medical diagnostic and treatment technology; tourism and food including hotel restaurants and catering; and Languages.

In 2018, the approximate breakdown of the NTF recurrent funding and the student numbers being supported is as follows:

Name	Amount	Number
Medical Devices:	€ 7,000,000	(c.1,400 students)
Tourism and Food:	€14,000,000	(c.3,800 students)

Name	Amount	Number
Languages:	€16,000,000	(c.4,800 students)
Total:	€37,000,000	(c.10,000 students)

The breakdown is informed by, and extracted from, the total student numbers returned by institutions to the HEA via the Student Records System (SRS).

For 2018, a drawdown profile has been agreed as follows, with €13m having been allocated and paid to Higher Education Institutions as at end May 2018.

Year	Amount
March:	€13,000,000
June:	€13,000,000
October:	€11,000,000
Total:	€37,000,000

National Training Fund

301. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the €38 million allocated to apprenticeships and traineeships as outlined in budget 2018; the amount of the allocation that has been spent; the number of apprenticeship and traineeship positions that have been created and filled; the way in which the funds were spent; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24309/18]

302. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the €19 million allocated to the national training fund for the funding of apprenticeships and skills as outlined in budget 2018; the amount of the allocation that has been spent from the National Training Fund; the way in which the funds were spent; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24310/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan): Budget 2018 saw an additional €38m allocated to apprenticeship and traineeship which represents an increase of over 30% on the 2017 allocation. This increased allocation will support 6,200 apprenticeship registrations and up to 3,900 traineeship enrolments during the year. There was also €19 million of apprenticeship expenditure resourced from the Exchequer in 2017 that was transferred to the National Training Fund in 2018.

There were 438 traineeship enrolments for quarter one 2018. Information on expenditure to date in 2018 on traineeships has not yet been collated by SOLAS from the 16 Education and Training Boards.

The information requested by the deputy on apprenticeship registrations and total expenditure on craft and consortia led apprenticeships to date in 2018 is set out in the following table.

REGISTRATIONS	2018
	31st May YTD
Craft Apprenticeships	1,914
Consortia Apprenticeships	54
Total Expenditure to date	€46,799,364

Springboard Programme

303. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the €3 million allocated to Springboard as outlined in budget 2018; the amount of the allocation that has been spent; the way in which the funds were spent; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24311/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Funding for Springboard+ is allocated from the National Training Fund. In 2018 an additional €3m was allocated to Springboard+ which will provide for over 1,600 additional places during 2018.

Under Springboard+ 2018, which was launched this week, over 8,000 places on 245 courses will be available in public and private educational institutions throughout Ireland. Courses approved for funding in 2018 will be in the following skills areas: ICT, Engineering, Manufacturing, Construction, Hospitality, Business, Administration and Law. Limited courses will also be available in Entrepreneurship, Animation, Medical Devices Decontamination and certain other manufacturing related services courses.

Springboard+ courses are at Level 6 (Certificate) to Level 9 (Masters) on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) and are delivered in public and private education facilities around the country. Courses selected for funding are in areas of identified enterprise skills needs and were selected, following a competitive call for proposals, by an independent evaluation panel using published criteria that included value for money, flexible delivery, engagement with industry and skills relevance. All courses provide job-readiness training and most offer the opportunity for work placement, project-based learning or industry site visits where appropriate.

I am sure that the Deputy will be pleased to note that the eligibility criteria for Springboard+ 2018 has been extended and will include the following:

- Free higher education courses for unemployed people, those previously self-employed and those returning to work.
- Free NQF Level 6 higher education courses for those in employment.
- For employed participants on courses NFQ level 7 – 9, 90% of the course fee will be funded by the Government, with participants required to contribute just 10% of the fee.

Further information on Springboard+ 2018 including entry requirements and eligibility criteria are available on the dedicated information and applications website: www.springboard-courses.ie.

National Training Fund

304. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the €3.5 million allocated to Skillnet as outlined in budget 2018; the amount of the allocation that has been spent; the way in which the funds were spent; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24312/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan): Skillnet Ireland is funded by my Department through the National Training Fund (NTF) to act as an enterprise-led support body dedicated to the promotion and facilitation of enterprise training and workforce development as key elements in sustaining national competitiveness.

Its primary role is to increase participation in enterprise training by companies to upskill the workforce and provide greater access for workers to skills development.

Skillnet Ireland operates a joint funding model where training is funded by combining contributions from employers with Skillnet grants.

Skillnet Ireland has been allocated €21.7m in 2018, an additional €3.5 Million in NTF funding over 2017. This increase was allocated in response to a sharp increase in demand from employers for training via Skillnet Ireland.

Skillnet Ireland has undertaken to train 54,600 learners nationally in 2018, an increase of 11,600 (27%) when compared with the organisation's trainee target for 2017. Skillnet Ireland will deliver 344,745 training days in 2018, an increase of 46,745 days when compared with the 2017 target. In 2018, Skillnet Ireland has also established 5 new learning networks in sectors which are experiencing significant workforce development demand, including hospitality, recruitment, advanced electronics and manufacturing. Skillnet Ireland now funds 67 networks.

The additional funding has also facilitated an increase in Skillnet Ireland's investment in its Future Skills Programme, whereby its learning networks develop new programmes that address emerging skills needs in areas such as artificial intelligence, advanced manufacturing and global business services, MedTech, agriculture and retail amongst others.

By the end of May 2018, Skillnet Ireland has received €10m of their 2018 allocation.

Skills Development

305. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the €1 million allocated to new expenditure on regional upskilling and reskilling as outlined in budget 2018; the amount of the allocation that has been spent; the way in which the funds were spent; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24313/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan): The €1m allocated to new expenditure on regional upskilling and reskilling as outlined in the Estimates for 2018 is being made available for Regional Skills Fora to support innovative new responses to skills requirements in the regions.

As the Deputy may be aware the Regional Skills Fora are playing a crucial role in ensuring that planning for meeting key skills needs is informed and guided by information, evidence and assessments adopting a regional perspective.

This is in keeping with the regional development and growth objectives highlighted in the National Development Plan and the National Planning Framework that comprise Ireland Project 2040. The greater adoption of a regionally based approach to analysing and responding to skills needs is a critical element of the Government's strategy.

In specific terms, the Fund will support, for example, the 'Skills for Growth Project' which gives individual enterprises a new skills audit tool to articulate their skills needs alongside one to one assistance from Regional Skills Fora Managers to support them to link directly with the education and training system to develop responses to those needs.

It will also be applied to relevant skills related collaborative projects involving regional enterprise, alongside education and training providers. Just last week I launched such an initiative, the EXPLORE initiative.

The key objective of the initiative is to create a potential new solution to help address the issue of Ireland's low level of participation in lifelong learning amongst the Irish workforce, targeting particularly persons over 35 years of age in manufacturing employment. It seeks to;

- Address the lack digital skills in this cohort
- Provide a novel approach to overcome barriers to participation in life-long learning
- address the key issue of skills obsolescence which is a significant concern for employers
- showcase the benefits of collaboration between local Education and Training providers and industry

The focus on this cohort is based on the evidence both internationally, nationally and regionally and in light of the recent National Skills Council decision to prioritise Lifelong learning for 2018.

The Regional Skills Fora have a key role in leveraging their existing network to identify and create solutions that deliver work-relevant skills for this target group and it is planned to offer the programme to 400 individuals before the end of 2018.

Schools Building Projects Expenditure

306. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the €20 million allocated to the school building programme as outlined in budget 2018; the amount of the allocation that has been spent; the way in which the funds were spent; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24314/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Mid-Term Review of the Capital Plan 2016-2021 identified an additional €332m for the school sector over the period 2018 to 2021 of which €20m was included for the sector in Budget 2018. The overall 2018 capital allocation for the school sector including the €20m amounts to just under €540m, together with a capital allocation of €30m in respect of the Digital Strategy for Schools.

The €540m will be expended in 2018 primarily on the delivery of large scale projects and the Additional Accommodation Scheme. Typically, expenditure of up to 80% of the capital allocation available to schools annually is in respect of the large scale projects and the Additional Accommodation Scheme. The balance available in 2018 will be expended on site acquisitions, emergency works, furniture and equipment provision, and other programmes.

Capital expenditure to date in 2018 on the school building programme amounts to over €185m. In addition, the €30m to support implementation of the Digital Strategy for Schools issued earlier this year.

Apprenticeship Programmes

307. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the €8 million allocated to equipment and fit-out costs associated with the expansion of apprenticeship programmes as outlined in budget 2018; the amount of the allocation that has been spent; the way in which the funds were spent; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24315/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): On 11 June 2018 together

with my colleagues, the Minister of State for Higher Education and the Minister of State for Training, Skills, Innovation and Research and Development, we announced capital funding of €8 million in total across 10 Institutes of Technology. The funding will enable the Institutes of Technology purchase equipment and carry out enabling works for the delivery of new modernised syllabi in 13 existing apprenticeship trades from 2018. Details of the funding are set out in the table below.

This Government is committed to more than doubling the number of new apprentices registered to 9,000 by 2020 and expanding further into new skills areas. Budget 2018 allocated €122m for apprenticeship training, an increase of almost 24% on the previous year. This will allow the Government to deliver 10 more apprenticeship programmes and over 6,000 new apprenticeship registrations in 2018.

[Table]

National Educational Psychological Service Data

308. Deputy John Brassil asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of NEPs recruited since May 2016; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24326/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I can inform the Deputy that my Department's National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) provides educational psychological support to all primary and post-primary schools involving direct access to a NEPS psychologist for responses to queries arising, access to support and development work to build school capacity to support students, direct support in the event of a critical incident and access to individual pupil casework input via a NEPS psychologist or through the Scheme for the Commissioning of Psychological Assessments. (SCPA).

In 2016 the sanctioned number of psychologists allowed to NEPS was 173 whole-time equivalent posts (w.t.e.). The provisions of Budget 2017 increased NEPS Psychologist numbers by 11 posts to 184 w.t.e.

As of 1st May 2016 the complement of NEPS psychologists stood at 164.1 w.t.e with some 9 posts vacant. In Autumn of 2016 a recruitment competition was put in place by my Department in conjunction with the Public Appointments Service (PAS) to replenish regional recruitment panels to serve the ongoing needs of NEPS in this regard. Currently NEPS staffing numbers stand at 181.5 w.t.e with three vacancies existing which are currently being pursued with PAS.

I can inform the Deputy that since 1st May 2016 some 29 new recruits have been engaged in NEPS realising a net increase of some 16.5 w.t.e posts when ongoing staffing losses (resignations retirements) are taken into account.

The Deputy may be aware that provision was made within Budget 2018 for the employment of an additional 10 psychologist staff within NEPS with effect in the coming academic year. The recruitment of these staff has already commenced utilising the regional panels referred to above. Arrangements are in hand with the Public Appointments Service to shortly put in place a new recruitment competition to refresh these panels sufficient to this complete this process and to service the ongoing recruitment needs of the NEPS into the future.

This will bring the overall complement of NEPS Psychologists to some 194 whole-time equivalents, the highest level since the Service's inception allowing for a broadening and deepening of the service provided to schools and underpinning my Department's and this Gov-

ernment's commitment to supporting an effective educational psychological service for our schools.

Teachers' Professional Development

309. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of primary and secondary school teachers who have completed SafeTALK and ASIST, applied suicide intervention skills training, courses respectively since May 2016; the provisions in place to support teachers to partake in these courses; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24327/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): In accordance with our commitment under Connecting for Life: Ireland's National Strategy to Reduce Suicide 2015-2020, my Department, in conjunction with the National Office for Suicide Prevention (NOSP) has introduced a training model for the delivery of SafeTALK suicide prevention training through the Education Centre network. Following discussions with the NOSP on the suitability of the training programmes available, it was considered important to make provision for SafeTALK as a first step. This training model is being provided initially in selected Education Centres, followed by a review to plan further engagement.

This training commenced in the 2017/18 school year in 6 Education Centres. To date 8 primary, 100 post primary and 6 special needs teachers have attended these courses.

It is planned to extend this provision in the 2018/19 school year and NOSP, the Education Centre Network and my Department are working together to offer these courses in a further 6 Education Centres in autumn 2018. Following the completion of this phase and a review of delivery, we will work with NOSP to develop a plan for 2019-2020.

Stakeholders from the education sector can also avail of the suite of training in suicide awareness and prevention provided by NOSP outside of the Education Centre model, as appropriate. For example, between January and December 2017, the National Office for Suicide Prevention (NOSP) received 9,777 completed participant training forms from individuals who had taken part in either a self-harm or suicide prevention training programme. An analysis of participant training forms by sector of employment indicated that 12.10% are within the Education sector.

Schools Establishment

310. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of his plans for the establishment of an Educate Together school in Westport; the steps which have been taken to date to establish the school; and the proposed date for the school to open. [24332/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): As the Deputy will be aware, I have announced new plans aimed at accelerating the provision of multi-denominational and non-denominational schools across the country, in line with the choices of parents, families and school communities and the Programme for Government commitment to reach 400 such schools by 2030.

I would point out that the previous model of patronage divestment yielded only a very limited number of schools for transfer to multi-denominational patrons (10 since 2013). I believe

that the new schools reconfiguration for diversity process has the potential to significantly increase patron diversity in our school system.

While these new structures are being introduced, my Department will continue to work with the main stakeholders to progress delivery of diversity in areas already identified, including Westport. In this regard, my Department has been working closely with Educate Together to progress the establishment of a new multi-denominational school in Westport.

School Transport

311. Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony asked the Minister for Education and Skills the level of the remote area grant; the occasion on which it was last increased; his plans to increase it for the 2018/2019 school year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24341/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan): School transport is a significant operation managed by Bus Éireann on behalf of the Department.

Currently over 116,000 children, including almost 12,000 children with special educational needs, are being transported in over 4,500 vehicles on a daily basis to primary and post-primary schools throughout the country covering over 100 million kilometres annually at a total cost of almost €190 million in 2017.

In general, children are eligible for school transport if they meet the distance criteria and are attending their nearest school.

Children who are eligible for school transport but for whom no transport service is available may, following an application for transport within the prescribed time limits, receive a Remote Area Grant towards the cost of private transport arrangements. The grant is calculated on the distance that children reside from their school and the number of days attended. The rate of grant varies from about €200 to €900 per annum and has not changed in recent years.

This grant is also payable for eligible children who may have to travel 3.2 kilometres or more to or from a designated pick up/set down point.

This grant is payable annually at a fixed daily rate, to each eligible family, regardless of the number of children from the same family, travelling to a particular school.

The Remote Area Grant is not intended to cover the actual cost of providing transport and in this regard, there are no plans to review the current rates applicable.

School Supervision and Substitution Scheme

312. Deputy John Curran asked the Minister for Education and Skills the steps and actions he is taking to address the ongoing difficulty for schools to obtain substitute teachers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24383/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): As the Deputy will be aware, additional investment has allowed the successful recruitment of over 5,000 additional teachers in the last two years. Since 2012/2013, there are 8,900 more teachers in our schools. No other part of the public service has seen growth on this scale, which is testament to the Government's commitment to, and the importance of education in, fulfilling our national ambitions.

The numbers of graduates from initial teacher education (ITE) programmes have also remained stable. Over 8,000 primary and 7,600 second level teachers have graduated in the last five years and in 2018 it is estimated that approximately 3,300 primary and post primary teachers will graduate.

I am aware of reports that some schools are experiencing difficulties in finding substitute teachers. In order to ease the situation, I suspended the limits that teachers on career break can work as substitutes. Schools have also been reminded that, in considering career break applications, the needs of pupils should take precedence and they must take account of the availability of appropriate qualified replacement teachers.

As the Deputy is aware, I convened the first meeting of the Teacher Supply Steering Group, which is chaired by the Secretary General of my Department, on 26th March 2018. The Group met again in May and is due to meet again at the end of this month.

The Steering Group is considering the issues that impact on teacher supply, including: initial teacher education policy, provision, funding and support; data/research requirements; policies and arrangements for schools and teachers that impact on teacher mobility/supply; and promotion of the teaching profession. The Steering Group will oversee a programme of actions according to strict timelines and clear deliverables. In undertaking its task, the Group is cognisant of the requirement that all persons wishing to teach in recognised schools must meet the professional registration standards and criteria set by the Teaching Council, which is the professional regulatory body for the teaching profession.

Social Media in Education

313. Deputy Timmy Dooley asked the Minister for Education and Skills if funding is available for schools or other organisations to provide safer social media alternatives to children and young persons. [24385/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): My Department is keenly aware of the challenges faced by educators, parents, and children, in relation to online safety and provides a suite of supports in that regard. The use of social media by schools is a matter for the board of management of each individual school.

Through the prescription of school curriculum, the Department supports overall student learning and in particular, the development by students of the skills and competencies necessary to negotiate living in the 21st century including being safe using online technologies. For example, the Social Personal & Health Education programme which is a compulsory subject for all primary and post primary students up to Junior Cycle, addresses student well-being including online safety.

The PDST (Technology in Education) is a dedicated team established and funded by the Department to advise and support schools in the area of digital technologies, including issues of internet safety.

Information and resources are also available for parents, teachers and children through the Webwise Internet Safety Initiative, funded by this Department and the EU Safer Internet Project. The Programme provides access to information on the latest technologies and the changing use of social media. Webwise.ie website promotes the autonomous, effective and safer use of the internet by young people through a sustained information and awareness strategy targeting school leaders, teachers, parents and children themselves with consistent and relevant messages.

Schools are also advised on the development and implementation of an Acceptable Usage Policy (governing the use of the internet in schools); the promotion of awareness regarding safety online; and the implementation of a content filtering/monitoring system which my Department provides to schools through the Schools Broadband Access Programme.

One of the key objectives of the Digital Strategy for Schools 2015-2020 is to promote responsible and ethical use of the internet and related technologies and to continue to undertake awareness-raising actions and programmes that promote responsible and ethical use of the internet. My Department recently published a circular requesting schools to consult with parents and students and teachers to develop and inform policies for the use of smart phones and tablet devices in schools.

The Digital Strategy for Schools also commits to €210m in funding for multi-annual ICT Infrastructure Grants to schools over the period of the Strategy. The second tranche of this funding (€30m), in respect of the 2017/2018 school year, has issued to schools.

Online safety of children is a matter relevant to many Government Departments, as well as parents and the wider society. This requires a whole of Government approach and my Department is collaborating with these Departments on the development of an Action Plan on Internet Safety led by the Department of An Taoiseach. Ongoing engagement is also maintained the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment which has a lead role in co-ordinating Government policy for internet safety, and also with the Department of Justice and Equality through their Office for Internet Safety.

Schools Establishment

314. Deputy Catherine Murphy asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Question No. 313 of 7 November 2017, the status of his plans to establish an Educate Together school in Leixlip; his further plans to establish more Educate Together schools in north and south County Kildare, respectively; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24399/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): As the Deputy will be aware, I have announced new plans aimed at accelerating the provision of multi-denominational and non-denominational schools across the country, in line with the choices of parents, families and school communities and the Programme for Government commitment to reach 400 such schools by 2030.

I would point out that the previous model of patronage divestment yielded only a very limited number of schools for transfer to multi-denominational patrons (10 since 2013). I believe that the new schools reconfiguration for diversity process has the potential to significantly increase patron diversity in our school system.

While these new structures are being introduced, my Department will continue to work with the main stakeholders to progress delivery of diversity in areas already identified, including Leixlip.

As the Deputy will be aware, I recently announced plans for the establishment of 42 new schools over the next four years (2019 to 2022), including:

- a new 8-classroom primary school to be established in 2019 to serve the Leixlip school planning area.

- a new 8-classroom primary school to be established in 2019 to serve the Maynooth school planning area.

- a new 8-classrooms primary school to be established in 2021 to serve the Naas school planning area.

This announcement follows nationwide demographic exercises carried out by my Department into the future need for primary and post-primary schools across the country and the 4-year horizon will enable increased lead-in times for planning and delivery of the necessary infrastructure.

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

Student Grants Data

315. Deputy David Cullinane asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated cost of restoring higher education grant thresholds to pre-budget 2011 rates; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24425/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): It is not possible to definitively estimate the “cost of restoring higher education grant thresholds to pre-budget 2011 rates”.

To put it in context, in 2010/11 there were 71,532 students who benefitted from grant support at a cost of €355m, whereas in 2016/17 there were 78,904 students in receipt of grant support at a cost of €377m.

In the intervening years, we have centralised the student grant scheme (replacing four separate schemes and sixty six awarding authorities with one scheme administered by a centralised awarding authority), had a complete turnover of students, income levels have changed and numerous changes have been made to the annual schemes which affect eligibility criteria. Furthermore, increasing the income thresholds will attract additional students who currently don’t apply to SUSI. As such, there is no way of accurately predicting the number of additional students who might apply if the income thresholds were increased nor does SUSI hold any income data on these students, which might enable some estimate of the likely cost.

What I can say is that the average cost of a grant in 2016/17 was €4,700. Therefore, each additional qualifying student will, on average cost €4,700.

Special Educational Needs Service Provision

316. Deputy Jim O’Callaghan asked the Minister for Education and Skills if the special needs assistants provided to an organisation (details supplied) can be maintained at the current level rather than having two full-time special needs assistants and one teacher removed from the school; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24450/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): This Government is committed to ensuring that children with special educational needs are supported and given every

opportunity to fulfil their full potential.

Special Needs Assistants play a key role in supporting children who have additional care needs to attend school and participate in education.

There will be a total of 15,000 Special Needs Assistants working in our schools by the end of this year. This is a 42% increase on 2011, when the number of SNAs stood at 10,575. The Government now invests €524 m in SNAs annually, as part of a total €1.75 billion investment in special educational needs overall.

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) is responsible for determining the appropriate staffing levels in special schools.

Special schools are staffed based on their actual current pupil profiles and the disability category of each pupil (full details of Teacher allocation provisions in Circular 0042/2011).

The policy of my Department is to ensure that every child who is assessed as needing SNA support will receive access to such support.

In considering applications for SNA support for individual pupils, the NCSE 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 additional care needs leave the school, as new children with additional care needs enrol in a school and as children develop more independent living skills and their additional care needs diminish over time.

The NCSE Appeals Process for the provision of SNA support 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.

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.

Special schools may appeal a decision regarding teaching resource allocations to the NCSE, where the school considers that the NCSE, in applying Department policy, has not allocated the appropriate level of teaching support to the school to meet the educational needs of the children in the school concerned.

As this question relates to a particular school, I have referred the question to the NCSE for their direct reply.

School Enrolments Data

317. Deputy Catherine Martin asked the Minister for Education and Skills to set out the number of junior infants, senior infants and first classes in the primary system; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24461/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The information requested

by the Deputy, regarding the number of junior infants, senior infants and first class standards in the primary system, containing more than one standard, is as shown.

As well as Single Grade classes, with only one standard (Junior/Senior Infants, First Class, etc.) there are Consecutive Grade and Multi-Grade classes, containing more than one standard, as shown.

Grade Structure	Number of Classes
Single Grade Classes - Total	15,973
Of which -	-
Junior Infants	2,357
Senior Infants	2,197
1st	2,120
2nd	2,072
3rd	1,912
4th	1,812
5th	1,678
6th	1,825
Consecutive Grade Classes - Total	4,278
Of which	-
Junior Infants - Senior Infants	887
Senior Infants-1st	272
1st - 2nd	669
2nd - 3rd	344
3rd - 4th	799
4th - 5th	287
5th - 6th	1,020
Multi-Grade Classes - Total	1,901
Of which	-
Containing Infants	752
Not containing Infants	1,149
TOTAL	22,152
-	Count Class
Classes containing Junior Infants	3,965
Classes containing Senior Infants	4,087
Classes containing 1st Class	3,981
TOTAL	12,033

School Enrolments Data

318. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills to set out the number of students enrolled in junior infants, senior infants and first class; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24462/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): There were 68,438 pupils enrolled in Junior Infants in the 2016-17 school year; 71,270 in Senior Infants and 71,027 in First Year.

Questions - Written Answers
Special Educational Needs Expenditure

319. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills to set out the cost of a special needs assistant at primary school level; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24463/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): This Government is committed to ensuring that children with special educational needs are supported and given every opportunity to fulfil their full potential.

Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) play a key role in supporting children who have additional care needs to attend school and participate in education.

There will be a total of 15,000 SNAs working in our schools by the end of this year. This is a 42% increase on 2011, when the number of SNAs stood at 10,575. The Government now invests €524m in SNAs annually, as part of a total €1.75 billion investment in special educational needs overall.

The average salary cost of a Special Needs Assistant at primary school level is currently €35,700 including employer PRSI.

School Funding

320. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will address a matter (details supplied) regarding funding for schools; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24511/18]

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.

My Department recognises the importance of the Minor Works Grant to primary schools. The National Development Plan 2018-2027 signals a gradual ramping up in capital expenditure in the schools sector over the coming years. In that context, and as part of our longer term infrastructural planning, my Department would intend to put the Minor Works Grant on an annual footing and to provide greater certainty to schools on the timing of payment.

Student Grant Scheme Payments

321. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Education and Skills to set out the estimated cost of increasing the grant to reflect inflation rates and the consumer price index year-on-year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24517/18]

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

According to the Central Statistics Office, the annual average rate of inflation in 2017 was 0.4%. This compares to a no change for 2016 and a fall of 0.3% for 2015.

Maintenance grant expenditure in 2016/17 was €171 m. Applying a 0.4% increase to this figure would increase the cost by €684 k.

Student Grant Scheme Eligibility

322. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Education and Skills to set out the estimated cost of reversing the budget 2011 decision to increase the SUSI grant non-adjacency qualifying distance from 24 km to 45 km; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24518/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The cost of reversing the change to the distance criterion from the existing 45 km to 24 km, is estimated to be in the region of €26 m.

The above costing assumes that a change to the distance criterion would result in a similar percentage of students qualifying for the higher non-adjacent grant support, as existed pre Budget 2011.

Free Travel Scheme Data

323. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Education and Skills to set out the estimated cost of providing a free travel card to students in receipt of a grant or on the back-to-education allowance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24519/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The BTEA and the Free Travel Scheme are administered by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection. I've been advised that the Free Travel Scheme is currently available to people who are aged 66 years or over and who are permanently residing in the State.

In 2016/17, there were 78,904 students in receipt of SUSI grant support. The cost of extending the Free Travel Scheme to this cohort of students or to BTEA recipients is a matter for the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection.

Teacher Training Provision

324. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Education and Skills to set out the estimated cost of paying 80% of the entry level rate to student teachers on placement; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24520/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): School Placement is a critical part of initial teacher education (ITE) as it enables the student teacher to experience teaching and learning in a variety of contexts, and to participate in school life in a way that is structured and supported.

As you are aware, the Teaching Council is the statutory body that sets and upholds the standards for entry to the profession and reviews and accredits programmes of teacher education and training provided by Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the State. Based on existing good practice, the Teaching Council prepared and published School Placement Guidelines in partnership with stakeholders in 2013.

The Teaching Council has determined that 25% (30 weeks) of student time over the four years of undergraduate programmes and 40% (24 weeks) of student time over the two years of postgraduate programmes should be allocated to school placement.

The estimated cost of paying 80% of the entry level rate to student teachers on placement is approximately €50 million.

Schools Building Projects Status

325. Deputy Niamh Smyth asked the Minister for Education and Skills to outline the status of works for a school (details supplied); the completion date for same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24522/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Board of Management of the school to which the Deputy refers was recently authorised to issue the Letter of Acceptance to the preferred bidder. It is envisaged that construction should commence in late June/early July and the project will take approximately 27 months to complete.

Special Educational Needs Service Provision

326. Deputy Sean Sherlock asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a person (details supplied) in County Kildare can receive assistance with educational needs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24525/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) is responsible 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.

In considering applications for SNA support for individual pupils, the NCSE 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.

My Department's policy is to ensure that every child who is assessed as needing SNA support will receive access to such support. In line with this policy, I announced last month that 800 additional SNAs 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.

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 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 support 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.

Schools Building Projects Status

327. Deputy Alan Kelly asked the Minister for Education and Skills to outline the status of the school building project at a school (details supplied); and the year in which he expects the construction of the extension to commence. [24583/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Deputy will be aware that a project for the school to which he refers is included in my Department's 6 Year Capital Programme.

My Department is currently finalising the long term projected enrolment and schedule of overall accommodation with a view to developing the project brief for the school project. My Department will be in further contact with the school authorities shortly to advise of next steps in respect of progressing the project.

Third Level Staff

328. Deputy Alan Kelly asked the Minister for Education and Skills to set out in tabular form the expenditure in each of the years 2013 to 2017 by all third level institutions, respectively on property provision for their presidents or equivalents; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24584/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The information requested by the Deputy is currently being collated by my Department. I will revert directly to the Deputy

shortly.

Traffic Management

329. Deputy Catherine Murphy asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his attention has been drawn to traffic management issues at a school (details supplied) in County Kildare; his plans to offer assistance in view of the fact that there are concerns regarding pupil and parent safety regarding the site and its surrounds; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24605/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The school to which the Deputy refers is located on an Education and Training Board (ETB) site. The ETB is in discussion with the local authority in relation to addressing traffic management issues for the site.

Programme for Government Implementation

330. Deputy Micheál Martin asked the Minister for Education and Skills to outline the status of the implementation of A Programme for a Partnership Government as it applies to his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24608/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): As the Deputy will be aware, the Government has published three Progress Reports on the Programme for Partnership Government, the most recent being in December last and will shortly publish the 2018 Annual Report.

Earlier this year, I published the end of year review on the 2017 Action Plan for Education and also launched the 2018 Action Plan for Education outlining hundreds of actions and sub-actions that will be implemented during the year.

Key achievements in the past year include:

- An increase of €554 m in the 2018 Education budget including €60 m for higher education
- 2,730 extra teachers recruited in 2017 with the pupil teacher ratio reduced to 26:1
- Updated DEIS Plan and expansion of the scheme to include 79 new schools
- Awarding of the first Junior Cycle Profiles of Achievements and new specifications for Irish, Modern Foreign Languages and Visual Art and a new Junior Cycle Wellbeing programme
- A New grading system and common points scheme introduced for the Leaving Certificate
- 3 new subjects at Senior Cycle - Politics and Society, Physical Education and Computer Science
- First transfer of school patronage under new Schools Reconfiguration for Diversity process
- Updated child protection procedures for schools to take into account the new statutory mandated reporting and child safeguarding requirements
- The National Skills Council and the nine Regional Skills Fora launched to drive the National Skills Strategy
- 6,471 places are being provided on 208 Springboard+courses over the academic year

2017/18

- 26 new apprenticeship programmes approved for further development into national apprenticeships following the second call for apprenticeship programmes

- 46 large-scale school building projects completed in 2017

- €16.5 m announced to support new initiatives to widen access to higher education over the next three years, with a strong focus on Lone Parents and Disadvantaged Groups

- Enactment of the Technological Universities Act 2018 for the creation of Technological Universities as drivers of regional growth and development.

My Department will continue to work with its agencies and stakeholders to ensure we deliver on the commitments set for it in the Programme for Government and to ensure we meet the goal we have set that the Irish Education and Training system will be the best in Europe by 2026.

Schools Building Projects Applications

331. Deputy Robert Troy asked the Minister for Education and Skills if an application by a school (details supplied) for an extension will be expedited; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24627/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Deputy will be aware that a building project for the school to which he refers is included in my Department's Capital Programme.

My Department is currently finalising the project brief with the aim of progressing the project into the architectural planning process shortly. In that regard, my Department will also be in direct contact with the school authority regarding the project.

Schools Site Acquisitions

332. Deputy Robert Troy asked the Minister for Education and Skills to outline the status of a request for permission by Longford Westmeath ETB to use its resources to acquire two acres from Longford County Council to facilitate future expansion of a school (details supplied). [24628/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I wish to clarify for the Deputy that Longford Westmeath ETB has applied to my Department for funding to purchase land adjacent to the school in question. The request will be considered and a decision will be conveyed to the ETB subsequently.

Oibreacha Feabhsúcháin do Scoileanna

333. D'fhiadfraigh Deputy Catherine Connolly den Aire Oideachais agus Scileanna maidir le ceist 157 an 28 Márta 2018, an bhfuil an fhaisnéis a bhí á lorg ag an Roinn faigte; an ndéanfaidh sé soiléiriú a thabhairt maidir le stádas an iarratais atá déanta ag an scoil; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [24630/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Mar is eol don Teachta, cheadaigh mo Roinnse deontas suntasach cineachta i Meán Fómhair 2014 don scoil i dtrácht le haghaidh leathnú buan agus oibreacha athchumraíochta a d'fhágfadh go bhféadfaí gach cóiríocht réamhdhéanta a bhaint de shuíomh na scoile.

Beidh a fhios agat go bhfuil an pleán costais athcheartaithe, a fuarthas ó údarás na scoile mí Aibreáin seo caite, á scrúdú faoi láthair agus beidh mo Roinnse i dteagmháil leis an scoil mar gheall air go luath.

Capitation Grants

334. Deputy Sean Fleming asked the Minister for Education and Skills to outline his views on the capitation payments for primary schools in view of the discrepancy between the payments at primary and secondary level education; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24633/18]

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 and post-primary level.

In general, post-primary schools 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.

Irish Language

335. Deputy Peadar Tóibín asked the Minister for Education and Skills to outline the estimated cost of extending the Gaeltacht school recognition schemes to preschools operating in the Gaeltacht. [24637/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022 that I published last year contains actions relating to promoting Irish-medium provision in Gaeltacht early-years settings. The responsibility for those actions lies primarily with my colleague, Minister Zappone, Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, within

her remit in funding and regulating the early years sector and with the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. I understand that DCYA and DCHG in consultation with my officials in DES are in the process of finalising proposals to implement relevant aspects of the Policy on Gaeltacht Education as well as other actions to support all naonraí and put in place a five-year implementation plan under the 20 year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010-2030. All actions will be costed as part of decisions around implementation.

Irish Language

336. Deputy Peadar Tóibín asked the Minister for Education and Skills to outline the estimated cost of including Irish as a module in level six early childhood care and education or equivalent. [24639/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan):

The Policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022 that I published last year contains actions relating to promoting Irish-medium provision in Gaeltacht early-years settings. The responsibility for those actions lies primarily with my colleague, Minister Zappone, Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, within her remit in funding and regulating the early years sector and with the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. I understand that DCYA and DCHG in consultation with my officials are in the process of finalising proposals to implement relevant aspects of the Policy on Gaeltacht Education as well as other actions to support all naonraí and put in place a five-year implementation plan under the 20 year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010-2030. Among the range of actions being considered by the three Departments are actions relating to the provision of appropriate education and training to support Irish medium provision for all naonraí. The cost of implementing this action will be considered in the context of decisions around implementation.

Irish Language

337. Deputy Peadar Tóibín asked the Minister for Education and Skills to outline the estimated cost of including Irish as a module in level five early childhood care and education or equivalent. [24640/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan):

The Policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022 that I published last year contains actions relating to promoting Irish-medium provision in Gaeltacht early-years settings. The responsibility for those actions lies primarily with my colleague, Minister Zappone, Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, within her remit in funding and regulating the early years sector and with the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. I understand that DCYA and DCHG in consultation with my officials in DES are in the process of finalising proposals to implement relevant aspects of the Policy on Gaeltacht Education as well as other actions to support all naonraí and put in place a five-year implementation plan under the 20 year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010-2030. Among the range of actions being considered by the three Departments are actions relating to the provision of appropriate education and training to support Irish medium provision for all naonraí. The cost of implementing this action will be considered in the context of decisions around implementation.

Capitation Grants

338. Deputy Eamon Scanlon asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to restore capitation funding to primary and post-primary schools as per the commitment in A Programme for a Partnership Government; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24642/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Programme for a Partnership Government committed to investing an extra €500m in education by 2021 through various measures including annual increases in primary and secondary capitation rates. Through budget 2017 and Budget 2018, we are now investing €1 billion more in 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.

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.

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. A similar type approach in relation to improvements in grant funding was applied, as appropriate, at post-primary level.

Special Educational Needs Service Provision

339. Deputy Tony McLoughlin asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason special needs assistants, SNAs, are being removed from a number of children (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24650/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) is responsible 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.

In considering applications for SNA support for individual pupils, the NCSE 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. My Department's policy is to ensure that every child who is assessed as needing SNA support will receive access to such support. In line with this policy, I announced last month that 800 additional SNAs 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.

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 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 support 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 particular children and schools, I have referred the question to the NCSE for their direct reply.

Emergency Works Scheme Applications

340. Deputy Peter Burke asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of an application by a school (details supplied) in County Westmeath for works to be carried out; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24670/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I wish to advise the Deputy that my Department has approved a resource room for the school to which he refers and the school authority has been advised accordingly.

With regard to the other matters referred to by the Deputy in the details supplied, my Department has advised the school authority to submit an Emergency Works Application for the works in question.

Special Educational Needs Service Provision

341. Deputy Lisa Chambers asked the Minister for Education and Skills the educational supports in place for children in the deaf community in County Mayo; the way in which this compares with other counties; his plans to provide extra educational supports for children in the deaf community; if not, the reason therefore; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24682/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): My Department provides for an extensive range of supports to assist pupils who are Deaf or hard of hearing in all counties including Mayo. In line with my Department's policy that children with special educational needs access appropriate education intervention in mainstream settings where possible, many Deaf or hard of hearing pupils are integrated into mainstream classes at primary and post-primary level, while other children who are Deaf or hard of hearing and have more complex needs may attend special schools or classes, which have lower pupil teacher ratios.

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) provides additional special edu-

tional needs teaching supports to mainstream schools, and provides for special class and special school placements and Special Needs Assistant (SNA) support to all schools.

In 2018/19 school year, there will be over 1,440 special classes in mainstream schools, of which 15 are for students who are deaf and 1 early intervention special class for the Deaf. Of the 124 special schools nationally, there are 2 special schools for the Deaf. There are currently no special classes or special schools for the Deaf in Co. Mayo. I have arranged for the NCSE to provide information directly to the Deputy, relating to supports for students who are deaf in mainstream classes in Co. Mayo and how it compares nationally.

The NCSE's new Support Service, through its Visiting Teacher Service for children who are Hearing Impaired, work in partnership with parents of hearing impaired children throughout Ireland, visiting their homes and/or meeting them in groups to inform, advise and offer guidance in matters pertaining to the child's education and overall development and in helping the children to derive maximum benefit from the educational opportunities available.

The Support Service also provides funding for individual teachers and whole school staff in mainstream schools, primary and post-primary, special schools, and special classes to undertake courses in Irish Sign Language, which are available throughout the country through a variety of providers. Included in the brief of the Support Service is to enhance the quality of learning and teaching of students with special educational needs through the provision of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and support for teachers.

Additional supports provided by my Department include funding to schools for assistive technology such as radio aids and Soundfield systems, special transport arrangements for pupils and enhanced levels of capitation in Special schools and Special Classes.

Funding is also provided by my Department for a weekly home tuition service whereby tutors visit the homes of Deaf and hard of hearing pre-school children and school-going pupils to provide training in Irish Sign Language (ISL) for these children, their siblings and parents in all Counties including Mayo.

The NCSE published Policy Advice on the Education of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children in Ireland which makes a number of recommendations for the improvement of educational provision for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children, including recommendations relating to ISL provision.

In addition, the Comprehensive review of the SNA Scheme, which has been recently published, makes a number of recommendations relating to students who are deaf or hard of hearing. Relating specifically to students who are deaf, the NCSE recommends Irish Sign Language qualified assistants in schools, to support profoundly deaf students whose primary language is ISL and that this provision should be aligned to the requirements of the Irish Sign Language Act 2017.

In line with the recommendations of this review and the requirements of the Irish Sign Language Act 2017, a scheme will be developed to provide Irish Sign Language support for students attending recognised schools, whose primary language is Irish Sign Language; while my Department will also seek to ensure that there are a sufficient number of educational placements offering Irish Sign Language training for teachers of children who are hearing impaired, and to determine, from time to time, the minimum qualifications of these teachers.

Schools Property

342. Deputy Mary Lou McDonald asked the Minister for Education and Skills the type of intervention made to encourage the trustees of a school (details supplied) to provide access to the building's facilities for use by local community groups and organisations. [24692/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Further to consultation with relevant school authorities, Guidelines on the use of School Buildings outside of School Hours were published by my Department in October 2017; these can be viewed on my Department's website.

The purpose of these guidelines is to provide guidance for schools in relation to the use of school buildings outside of school hours and for those schools who are considering putting such arrangements in place.

In general, the management of school premises at local level is a matter for the relevant school authorities, and if a community group is interested in using school facilities contact should be made with the school in the first instance.

Apprenticeship Programmes

343. Deputy Brendan Smith asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on a recent report (details supplied) on the availability of skilled personnel for a sector; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24703/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan): The report referred to by the Deputy states that firms are experiencing a shortage of qualified construction tradespeople across the family of construction trades and apprenticeships. Securing skills supply from the education and training to the construction sector is a major focus of my Department as part of broader Government actions to increase housing supply and roll out the National Development Plan and the National Planning Framework.

Construction related apprentice registrations increased from 1,713 in 2015 to 2,314 in 2016 which represents an increase of 35%. This trend continued in 2017 with a further increase of 28% on the 2016 figure bringing the total number of construction related registrations to 2,963.

Apprenticeship is a demand driven educational and training programme, which aims to develop the skills of an apprentice in order to meet the needs of industry and the labour market. Consequently, the number of construction related apprentices being registered is determined by employers within the construction sector. My Department and SOLAS are committed to supporting the registration of apprentices in the construction sector. Registrations on craft apprenticeships are forecast to increase further up to 2020.

As the Deputy is aware, we are currently expanding the range of apprenticeships on offer to meet the identified skill needs of industry. Arising from our first call for apprenticeship proposals in 2015 an apprenticeship in Engineering Services Management, with the Construction Industry Federation (CIF) as industry lead, is currently being developed into a national apprenticeship programme. In addition, we recently announced 26 new programmes, arising from last year's second call for proposals, to be further developed into national apprenticeships, including a scaffolding apprenticeship, again with the CIF as industry lead and a senior quantity surveyor apprenticeship with the Society of Chartered Surveyors Ireland as industry lead. These new programmes, once developed, will add to and complement the range of apprenticeships currently on offer in developing the skill needs identified by the sector.

In relation to the wet trades, highlighted as areas of particular concern in the report, SOLAS

in partnership with CIF and Waterford Wexford Education and Training Board (WWETB) operated a pilot initiative in the last year to test the viability of a shared apprenticeship scheme. Following analysis of the pilot outcomes and in consultation with both the CIF and WWETB, I understand that SOLAS decided not to operationalise the pilot initiative more widely. In particular, it was found that the pilot did not attract employers in sufficient numbers to suggest that the scheme had the potential to have a significant impact on apprenticeship recruitment. However, I understand from SOLAS that they are currently in discussions with representatives from the construction industry to assess how the scheme could be made more viable.

I intend to meet with the Construction Industry Federation in the coming weeks to discuss the report in question and I look forward to engaging with them on issues relating to employer engagement with the apprenticeship programme.

State Examinations Commission

344. Deputy Niamh Smyth asked the Minister for Education and Skills the entitlements of a person (details supplied) in circumstances; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24723/18]

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 Projects Data

345. Deputy Noel Rock asked the Minister for Education and Skills when the last new school planning area was added. [24732/18]

346. Deputy Noel Rock asked the Minister for Education and Skills when the current system of school planning areas was initiated. [24733/18]

347. Deputy Noel Rock asked the Minister for Education and Skills the way in which school planning areas take account of entirely new suburbs which did not exist when the original school planning areas were designed. [24734/18]

348. Deputy Noel Rock asked the Minister for Education and Skills the deviation in population that necessitates a new school planning area. [24735/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 345 to 348, inclusive, together.

As the Deputy will 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. The school planning areas were developed for use with the GIS in 2008 and with the introduction of Small Areas in Census 2011, these 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.

Major new residential developments in a school planning area have the potential to alter demand in that area. In that regard, as part of the recent demographic exercises, my Department engaged with each of the local authorities to obtain the up-to-date data on significant new residential development in each area. This is necessary to ensure that schools infrastructure planning is keeping pace with demographic changes as there is a constantly evolving picture with planned new residential development, including additional residential developments arising from the Local Infrastructure Housing Activation Fund (LIHAF).

School Enrolments Data

349. Deputy Noel Rock asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will provide the relevant departmental geographic information systems, GIS data, that is, enrolments and other relevant data which is mapped for the Finglas East, Ballymun, Dublin 11 school planning area. [24736/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): A list of the schools in the Finglas East - Ballymun - Dublin 11 school planning area, and their enrolments, is available in the following tables.

Roll Number	Official Name	Address (Line 1)	Address (Line 2)	Address (Line 3)
18038B	ST MARGA-RETS N S	ST MARGA-RETS	CO.DUBLIN.	
18682F	ST CANICES B N S	GLASANAON ROAD	FINGLAS	DUBLIN 11
18683H	ST CANICES G N S	Seamus Ennis Road	Finglas	Dublin 11
19208F	HOLY SPIRIT B N S	SILLOGE RD	BAILE MUNNA	ATHA CLIATH 11
19209H	SN AN SPIO-RAID NAIOMH C	SILLOGUE RD	BALLYMUN	DUBLIN 11
19430G	SCOIL AN TSEACHTAR LAOCH	Br. Bhaile Munna	B.Á.C.,11.	
19431I	ST JOSEPHS JNR	St Joseph's Junior National School	Balbutcher Lane	Ballymun

Roll Number	Official Name	Address (Line 1)	Address (Line 2)	Address (Line 3)
19583I	ST JOSEPHS SENIOR N S	ST JOSEPHS SENIOR NS	BALBUTCHER LANE	BALLYMUN
20059V	MOTHER OF DIVINE GRACE	HOLY FAITH NS	FERNDALE AVE	BALLYGALL
20220C	GAELSCOIL UI EARCAIN	Bóthar Ghlas an Éin	Fionnghlas	
60511O	Beneavin De La Salle College	Beneavin Road	Finglas	Dublin 11

School Type	2013/2014	2014/2015	2015/2016	2016/2017	2017/2018
Primary	86	93	92	94	96
Primary	431	434	432	440	430
Primary	418	452	454	460	472
Primary	338	338	346	354	341
Primary	273	289	304	324	313
Primary	210	215	210	208	210
Primary	144	149	142	148	146
Primary	129	130	124	127	141
Primary	450	473	494	487	478
Primary	235	265	292	320	326
Post Primary	486	470	472	482	448
Grand Total	3,200	3,308	3,362	3,444	3,401

Enrolments are at 30th September of the given academic year

School Curriculum

350. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if an exemption can be made in the case of a person (details supplied); the steps which need to be taken in order for this to be processed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24737/18]

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

If a school is uncertain as to whether a pupil's circumstances fall within the criteria of Circular 12/96 or where a school's decision to refuse an application for an exemption is queried, it is open to either the school or the parent/guardian to seek advice from my Department as to the application of the criteria for an exemption to a particular case. Officials from my Department will contact the Deputy with the details of how a request for advice in respect of the Irish exemption circulars may be processed.

351. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if there are other grants available, bar the Student Universal Support Ireland, SUSI, partial grant; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24738/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The main financial support available for qualifying postgraduate students is the Student Grant Scheme.

The Deputy will be aware that additional funding of €4 million was secured in Budget 2017 to facilitate the reinstatement of full maintenance grants, from September 2017, for the most disadvantaged postgraduate students. A further €3m was secured in Budget 2018 to meet the rolling cost of this measure.

Postgraduate students who meet the qualifying conditions for the special rate of grant under the Student Grant Scheme are eligible for a maintenance grant of up to €5,915; the income threshold in 2018/19 for this grant is €23,500. Qualifying postgraduate students may also be eligible to have their tuition fees paid up to a maximum fee limit of €6,270.

Alternatively, a postgraduate student may qualify to have a €2,000 contribution made towards the cost of his/her fees. The income threshold for this payment is €31,500 for the 2018/2019 academic year.

In terms of other supports, the main support is the Student Assistance Fund. This fund is available to students in third-level institutions experiencing exceptional financial need. This Fund assists students in a sensitive and compassionate manner, who might otherwise be unable to continue their third level studies due to their financial circumstances. Details of this fund are available from the Access Office in the third level institution attended.

Tax relief also is available on postgraduate tuition fees. Details in relation to this relief are available from the Revenue Commissioners at www.revenue.ie

Third Level Expenditure

352. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on whether the payment of €3,000 a month by University College Cork, UCC, for rental accommodation for its president is an appropriate use of taxpayer's money; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24743/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The information requested by the Deputy is currently being collated by my Department. I will revert directly to the Deputy shortly.

Third Level Expenditure

353. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on whether the expenditure of €60,000 per annum plus VAT over an eight year period by University College Cork, UCC, for a roof sign on Cork Opera House is a good use of taxpayer's money; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24744/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): As the Deputy is aware my Department allocates recurrent funding to the Higher Education Authority (HEA) for direct disbursement to the HEA designated higher education institutions, including the Universities and Institutes of Technology. The HEA allocates this funding to the institutions and the internal

disbursement of that funding is then a matter for the individual institution.

These institutions are autonomous bodies and are responsible for their own day to day affairs, including the allocation of all of its income (both public and private). University College Cork (UCC) has confirmed that this investment will feature in the 2017/18 financial statements and will be accounted for as part of UCC's non-pay expenditure.

The collaboration is grounded within the University's Act 1997, where the objects and function of a University as set out in Section 12 specifically extends to promoting the cultural and social life of society, while fostering and respecting the diversity of the University's traditions. Section 13(d) of the University Act also gives powers to the University to collaborate with such cultural and artistic interests to further the objects as set out in Section 12. This collaboration is specifically designed to ensure UCC is delivering on those objectives as enshrined in legislation.

UCC has advised the HEA that key features of the partnership include:

- Internships' for UCC students in Cork Opera House
- The partnership reflects UCC's strategy priorities
- The partnership will enable UCC to host large-scale international conferences
- Both organisations will collaborate on the research and development of a new MA in Arts & Cultural Management
- Both UCC and Cork Opera House have been features of the cultural landscape of the city

The multi-layered UCC-Cork Opera House partnership will also facilitate students becoming interns at the theatre in the areas of organisational management, marketing, production, business development and stage management.

School Admissions

354. Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett asked the Minister for Education and Skills if the case of a person (details supplied) will be addressed. [24749/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Under the Procedures for Hearing and Determining Section 29 Appeals, an appeal will only generally be admitted by my Department where the appeal has been made within 42 days of the decision of the school board of management to refuse enrolment. However, a longer period for making appeals may be allowed as an exception where my Department is satisfied that circumstances did not permit the making of an appeal within the 42 day limit. These procedures were developed after consultation with the education partners, including bodies representing parents.

Under the procedures, my Department has reviewed this particular Section 29 appeal application and a decision was taken on 30 May 2018 to admit the appeal. A letter to this effect was sent to the parents involved and the school. The Section 29 appeal will be processed in the normal way, with a facilitation process followed by a potential oral hearing on the appeal before a three person independent appeals committee.

The Educational Welfare Service (EWS) of Tusla, is the statutory body which can assist parents in securing a new school place for a student. The relevant regional section within the EWS can be contacted at 01-7718815.

Schools Building Projects Status

355. Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett asked the Minister for Education and Skills when a permanent building will be completed for a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24763/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Deputy will be aware that a building project for the school in question is included in my Department's six year construction programme.

In this regard, my Department is currently engaging with Kildare Wicklow Education Training Board in the context of progressing a building project for the school and will keep the school patron informed of progress.

Special Educational Needs Service Provision

356. Deputy Jack Chambers asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a person (details supplied) will receive the necessary level of special needs assistant, SNA, support as advised by health professionals; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24764/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) is responsible 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.

In considering applications for SNA support for individual pupils, the NCSE 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.

My Department's policy is to ensure that every child who is assessed as needing SNA support will receive access to such support. In line with this policy, I announced last month that 800 additional SNAs 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.

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 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 support 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.

Schools Building Projects Administration

357. Deputy David Cullinane asked the Minister for Education and Skills the definition of financial close stage for new school builds; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24781/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The term “financial close” in relation to new school builds is a term that is normally associated with Public Private Partnership projects. Financial close usually occurs when all the project and financing agreements have been signed and all the required conditions contained in them have been met. It enables funds (e.g. loans, equity, grants) to start flowing so that project implementation can actually start.

Schools Building Projects Status

358. Deputy David Cullinane asked the Minister for Education and Skills when construction will commence on site for a new school build for a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24782/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The school referred to by the Deputy is one of the schools included in the Schools Bundle 3 PPP programme. The Department is actively working with the NDFA and the PPP Company in the delivery of an extension to the school under the PPP contract. The Department anticipates that construction of the extension by the PPP Company shall commence in Q3 2018. However, this is subject, *inter alia*, to the development of technical, design and cost proposals by the PPP Company and agreement of these with the Department.

Schools Facilities

359. Deputy Michael McGrath asked the Minister for Education and Skills the funding supports that may be available to a secondary school in a DEIS area that wishes to convert an existing grass playing pitch to a 4G all weather playing pitch; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24788/18]

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.

Insurance Costs

360. Deputy Thomas Byrne asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason special schools are subject to increasing insurance premiums; and the steps he will take in this regard. [24797/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The two main grants provided by my Department are the Capitation grant to cater for day to day running costs such as heating, lighting, cleaning, insurance, general up-keep etc. and an Ancillary Services grant to cater for the cost of employing ancillary services staff. Schools are permitted to regard the Capitation and Ancillary grants as a combined grant.

In addition, enhanced payments are made for all students attending special schools and special classes. The rates vary, depending on the particular category of disability.

Responsibility for procurement of insurance and payment of same rests with Board of Management in respect of schools operated by them. If a particular school has a query in relation to the cost of insurance it should raise this directly with its insurance provider. Boards of Management should take a proactive approach when it comes to sourcing insurance in order to ensure best value is obtained and to ensure compliance with public procurement procedures. Schools Procurement Unit which has a national remit is available to advise and assist schools in relation to procurement matters.

Issues relating specifically to insurance costs in special schools were brought to my attention, through correspondence received from a number of special schools and through discussions with the National Association of Boards of Management in Special Education (NABMSE) .

I am advised that general increases in costs this year were due, in some instances, to an annual increase in insurance costs generally and in some cases, an increase in claims against special schools.

Separately, a number of special schools under the patronage of organisations that are funded by the HSE to provide health and personal social services on behalf of the HSE under Section 38 of the Health Act, experienced increased insurance quotes, when the funded bodies were delegated to the General Indemnity Scheme (GIS) under the State Claims Agency.

The effect of the delegation was that the special schools under their patronage needed to seek separate insurance cover.

Officials from my Department have been working with the State Claims Agency, in recent months, to seek a resolution to this issue. General agreement has been reached and work is underway to determine whether the special schools directly affected can be included under the General Indemnity Scheme.

Tax Collection

361. Deputy Joan Burton asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he is satisfied that all payments made by schools for services covered by relevant contracts tax, RCT, were cor-

rectly treated by those schools for tax purposes in regard to the moneys expended by schools on construction activities including the summer works schemes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24809/18]

362. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of schools which received funding under the summer works schemes or other projects which may fall within the RCT system audited by his Department in each of the years 2013 to 2017; the proportion of the number of the schools involved audited; the proportion of the spend involved in those audits; the number of cases in which his Department was concerned over the operation of RCT in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24810/18]

363. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his Department has had meetings with the Revenue Commissioners regarding the operation of RCT by schools; if so, the dates of those meetings; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24811/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 361 to 363, inclusive, together.

My Department liaises with the Revenue Commissioners directly on tax related issues as the need arises, however, I can confirm that there has been no communication between my Department's Finance Unit and the Revenue Commissioners specifically in relation to RCT in schools.

The Deputy will probably be aware that, under tax law, a school authority is regarded by the Revenue Commissioners as the "Principal Contractor" for tax purposes when it is delivering a building project. My Department advises a school authority of this at the time the grant for the works is being approved. Schools are also advised that the Revenue Commissioners have published a guidance document for school management authorities in this matter which is available on both my Departments website and the Revenue Commissioners' website

The main requirement for a school to meet its obligations is to register with the Revenue Commissioners' online system and to follow the Revenue Commissioners' guidance in relation to deducting and paying over tax, where this arises, for the contractor carrying out the works.

It is a matter for the Revenue Commissioners to decide, in the context of the specific tax affairs of the individual contractors employed by schools, whether or not tax is to be applied to the service being provided and at what rate that tax should be applied.

Before the grant for the works can be drawn down from my Department, a school authority must confirm to my Department that it has complied with its tax obligations. A grant will not be paid in the absence of this confirmation. However, the tax treatment itself of the services provided lies within the competency of the Revenue Commissioners and this aspect is, therefore, strictly a matter between a school authority and that Body. My Department does not keep the statistical data sought by the Deputy for these reasons.

School Transport Availability

364. **Deputy Pat Buckley** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the services available to assist young adults with a disability such as a person (details supplied) who had been availing of school transport accessing their continuing education as before; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24816/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan): School transport is a significant operation managed by Bus Éireann on behalf of the Depart-

ment.

Currently over 116,000 children, including almost 12,000 children with special educational needs, are being transported in over 4,500 vehicles on a daily basis to primary and post-primary schools throughout the country covering over 100 million kilometres annually at a total cost of almost €190 million in 2017.

Under the terms of my Department's School Transport Scheme for Children with Special Educational Needs, children are eligible for transport where they are attending the nearest recognised school that is or can be resourced to meet their special educational needs.

Special Schools funded by my Department are intended to cater for children and young persons with special educational needs from 4 years until the end of the school year in which they reach their 18th year. At that point, the Department of Health/Health Service Executive assumes direct responsibility for young adults with special educational needs who are over 18 years.

Accordingly, the person referred to by the Deputy is not eligible for school transport under the terms of the above scheme.

Schools Building Projects Applications

365. Deputy Joan Burton asked the Minister for Education and Skills if authorisation has issued to the board of management of a school (details supplied) to commence the pre-qualification of contractors for the new school; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24827/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Department recently completed the review of the Stage 2(b) submission for the project referred to by the Deputy and comments have issued. Each member of the design team was requested to submit written confirmations that they have completed a final review and are satisfied that the tender documentation is fully compliant with the Department's Technical Guidance Documents, Building Control (Amendment) Regulations and new Public Works Contract (PWC) tender documentation requirements.

These confirmations have recently been received and the Board of Management was authorised to commence the pre-qualification process to select a short-list of contractors for this project on 15 May 2018. Pre-qualification normally takes between eight and 12 weeks to complete. When pre-qualification is complete the project will then be progressed to tender stage.

Schools Building Projects Applications

366. Deputy Joan Burton asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of tenders received for the construction of the new Educate Together school, Maynooth, County Kildare by the closing date for completed tenders of 9 May 2018; when the tender report will be completed; when construction will commence on the new school; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24828/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The tender return period for this project was extended to 30 May. It would not be appropriate to provide details of tenders during an ongoing tender process. When the tender analysis is complete the project will then proceed to construction. This is expected to be in Quarter 3 of 2018.

Schools Building Projects Applications

367. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of expressions of interest received for the construction of a school (details supplied) by the closing date for receipt of expressions of interest of 21 May 2018; when it is expected that tenders will be invited for the project; when construction is likely to commence on the project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24829/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Expressions of interest were received from 16 main contractors for the project to which the Deputy refers. The Design team is currently assessing the information provided. This will be completed as quickly as possible. When this process has been completed, the project can proceed to tender. It is not possible to say when construction will commence until the tender process has been completed.

Schools Building Projects Applications

368. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if approval will issue to a school (details supplied) in regard to its application for additional school accommodation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24830/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I wish to advise the Deputy that my Department has approved additional accommodation at the school in question and the school has been advised accordingly. The project is being devolved to the school authority for delivery.

Schools Building Projects Applications

369. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if the delivery of the required refurbishment and extension to a school (details supplied) has been devolved to Kildare and Wicklow Education and Training Board; when a design team will be appointed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24831/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The delivery of the project to which the Deputy refers is being devolved to the Kildare and Wicklow Education and Training Board, KWETB. A project brief has recently been finalised and my Department is currently preparing a Service Level Agreement for issue to KWETB. Once the Service Level Agreement has been executed, KWETB will commence the process of appointing a Design Team to deliver the project.

Schools Site Acquisitions

370. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Question No. 186 of 24 April 2018, if there has been further progress with the site acquisition process; when a design team will be appointed to secure planning permission for the two new schools; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24832/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I can confirm that my Department is in the process of acquiring a site to accommodate the schools to which the Deputy refers.

There are some outstanding clarifications required with regard to the site before matters can be progressed and, with a view to progressing the site acquisition, my Department has been in contact with the vendor requesting an update on these.

My Department is aware of the current temporary arrangements for the schools and, subject to no issues arising, will be appointing a design team to progress the project to architectural planning as soon as it is possible to do so.

Schools Building Projects Applications

371. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if the stage 2B report for a school (details supplied) has been approved; if the school has been authorised to invite expressions of interest from contractors for the construction project; when the construction is likely to commence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24834/18]

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

The project is currently at Stage 2B of Architectural Planning. The Stage 2B report is being finalised and the Department is engaging with the Design Team in that regard.

On completion of Stage 2b and providing no other issues arise, the Department will be in a position to authorise the project to proceed to pre-qualification of contractors. The Department has written to the school outlining the projected timeframe for progression of this project to tender and construction stage and the steps involved.

Schools Building Projects Applications

372. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of expressions of interest received for the construction of a school (details supplied) by the closing date for receipt of expressions of interest of 3 May 2018; when it is expected that tenders will be invited for the project; when construction is likely to commence on the project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24835/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The major building project referred to by the Deputy is currently at Stage 2b – Detailed Design.

This project was authorised to commence the Pre-Qualification of Contractors in April 2018. The pre-qualification and short-listing of suitable contractors normally takes between 8 and 12 weeks to complete.

The Design Team has confirmed that it has received 23 expressions of interest and these applications are currently being assessed. A pre-qualification report will be forwarded to the Department once this exercise is complete.

Thereafter, the tender process for the awarding of a construction contract will be carried out. This process takes between seven and eight months to complete.

In February 2018 my Department issued a letter to the school and its Design Team advising them of a timeframe for the progression of this project through to Construction.

Questions - Written Answers
Career Guidance Services

373. Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin asked the Minister for Education and Skills if the review of career guidance services in schools, higher education institutes and colleges of further education will include special schools; and his plans to provide career guidance to persons of 16 to 18 years of age attending special schools who are not in receipt of the service. [24843/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I can assure the Deputy that the views of special schools will be included in this review.

The purpose of the review of career guidance is to ensure that we are providing high quality, relevant career guidance information to students from post-primary level up to further and higher education. The review will look at the quality of information available to students and adults in relation to career guidance, the sources of this information and how the system is organised to support students and adults in this area.

The review is being carried out by independent consultants and will be guided and informed by a Steering Group. As part of the consultants proposed methodological approach to the review, my Department invited submissions from all interested stakeholders to assist in shaping the review by highlighting key issues to be considered in the course of carrying out the review. Drawing on the results of the consultation and further consideration by the Steering Group the question of the role and objectives of career guidance in supporting students in special schools will be assessed further. The closing date for receipt of submissions was Friday 1 June 2018.

In relation to career guidance for 16 to 18 year old persons attending special schools, the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) is responsible, through its network of Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs) for determining the appropriate staffing levels in special schools. Enhanced pupil teacher and Special Needs Assistant (SNA) ratios are provided to special schools to support them in dealing with pupil's educational and care needs. Special schools are staffed based on their actual current pupil profiles and the disability category of each pupil, as opposed to primarily by school designation, in recognition that many special schools now enrol students from disability categories other than those provided for by their original school designations. This process means that it is for school authorities to determine its staffing requirements in accordance with the requirements of the cohort of students attending the school which includes how best to use that resource to cater for curricular content.

Schools Site Acquisitions

374. Deputy John Curran asked the Minister for Education and Skills the progress made to date on the site acquisition process that will identify the location of the new 1,000 pupil post-primary school to be established in 2020 to serve the Tallaght, Newcastle and Rathcoole area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24852/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): As the Deputy is aware, I recently announced the opening of 42 new schools over the next four years. This announcement followed nationwide demographic exercises carried out by my Department into the current and future need for primary and post-primary school places across the country. The school to which the Deputy refers was part of that announcement.

In line with the policy on the use of state assets (Department of Public Expenditure and Reform Circulars 11/15 and 17/16), my Department is seeking to maximise the use of sites already in my ownership and of available properties in the ownership of other State bodies, where

these are considered suitable. In addition as part of my Department's ongoing engagement with Local Authorities in respect of statutory planning processes and under the MoU on school site acquisitions, my Department is examining all potential suitable site options, including appropriately zoned sites, to serve the relevant area. Taking into account all of the above, a decision will then be made as part of the site acquisition process in relation to an appropriate site for the school to which the Deputy refers and will be confirmed at a later date.

Schools Site Acquisitions

375. Deputy John Brassil asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will sanction the granting of funds for the purchase of an available site zoned for educational purposes for a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24864/18]

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

The project for the school in question was being progressed in the School Building Programme on the basis of an available site, i.e. the current site in the ownership of the ETB. In that regard a technical site visit was carried out by my Department at the ETB site with a view to developing the project brief. In regard to the alternative site referred to by the Deputy, I can confirm that my Department has not received a submission from the school Patron in relation to the acquisition of this site. A submission for an alternative proposal would be considered by my Department should the Patron wish to submit same.

Multidenominational Schools

376. Deputy Joan Collins asked the Minister for Education and Skills if, in the absence of a co-educational, multidenominational, non-fee paying secondary school in the Dublin 8 and 12 catchment areas, these areas will be included in the Dublin 6, 6W and Clonskeagh catchment areas (details supplied). [24883/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): As the Deputy will be aware, in November 2016, I announced the patronage of a new 1,000 pupil post-primary school to be established in 2018 to serve the Dublin South City Centre area. This new school, which will be a co-educational, multi-denominational school under the patronage of Educate Together, will serve the Dublin 8 school planning area, along with the Dublin 2, Dublin 4, Dublin 6 and Clonskeagh school planning areas as a regional solution.

More recently, in April 2018, I announced plans for the establishment of 42 new schools over the next four years (2019 to 2022), including new post-primary schools for areas adjacent to Dublin 8 and Dublin 12 as follows:

- new 1,000 pupil post-primary school to be established in 2020 as a regional solution to serve the Dublin 6, Clonskeagh and Dublin 6W school planning areas
- new 600 pupil post-primary school to be established in 2021 to serve the Dublin 2 and Dublin 4 school planning area.

These new schools will further reduce pressure on schools in the adjacent school planning areas, including the Dublin 8 and 12 areas. A patronage process, which will be open to all patron bodies, will be run by my Department to decide who will operate these schools.

Questions - Written Answers
Schools Building Projects Status

377. Deputy Darragh O'Brien asked the Minister for Education and Skills the measures he is taking to resolve the chronic shortage of primary school places in Kinsealy, Malahide and Portmarnock; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24949/18]

384. Deputy Darragh O'Brien asked the Minister for Education and Skills the measures he is taking to resolve the chronic shortage of primary school places in Kinsealy, Malahide and Portmarnock; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24956/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 377 and 384 together.

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 Kinsealy, Malahide, and Portmarnock are located in the Malahide, Nevinstown and Portmarnock school planning areas.

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

In addition to the new schools announced, there will be a need for further school accommodation in other areas in the future. Based on the current analysis, this need can be addressed through either planned capacity increases in existing schools or additional accommodation or extensions to existing schools. Approximately 40% of school places are delivered by extending existing schools, rather than by building new schools.

I have highlighted that the requirement for new schools will be kept under on-going review and in particular would have regard for the increased roll-out of housing provision as outlined in Project Ireland 2040.

I wish to advise the Deputy that in September 2014, a new multi-denominational primary school was established to serve both of these school planning areas.

Schools Building Projects Status

378. Deputy Darragh O'Brien asked the Minister for Education and Skills the measures he is taking to resolve the chronic shortage of primary school places in Swords; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24950/18]

385. Deputy Darragh O'Brien asked the Minister for Education and Skills the measures he is taking to resolve the chronic shortage of secondary school places in Swords; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24957/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 378 and 385 together.

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, Swords is located in the Swords school planning area.

As the Deputy will be aware, I announced plans for the establishment of 42 new schools over the next four years (2019 to 2022) including two 8-classroom primary schools to be established in Swords North and Swords South, in 2019. In addition, a new 1,000 pupil multi-denominational post-primary school under the patronage of Dublin and Dún Laoghaire Education and Training Board to serve the Swords school planning area will be established in September 2018.

This announcement follows nationwide demographic exercises carried out by my Department into the future need for primary and post-primary schools across the country and the 4-year horizon will enable increased lead-in times for planning and delivery of the necessary infrastructure.

In addition to the new schools announced, there will be a need for further school accommodation in other areas in the future. Based on the current analysis, this need can be addressed through either planned capacity increases in existing schools or additional accommodation or extensions to existing schools. Approximately 40% of school places are delivered by extending existing schools, rather than by building new schools.

I have highlighted that the requirement for new schools will be kept under on-going review and in particular would have regard for the increased roll out of housing provision as outlined in Project Ireland 2040.

Schools Building Projects Status

379. Deputy Darragh O'Brien asked the Minister for Education and Skills the measures he is taking to resolve the chronic shortage of primary school places in Donabate; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24951/18]

387. Deputy Darragh O'Brien asked the Minister for Education and Skills the measures he is taking to resolve the chronic shortage of secondary school places in Donabate; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24959/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 379 and 387 together.

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 Donabate is located in the Donabate school planning area.

As the Deputy will be aware, I announced plans for the establishment of 42 new schools over the next four years (2019 to 2022), including a 16-classroom primary school for the Donabate school planning area, to be established in 2020. This announcement follows nationwide demographic exercises carried out by my Department into the future need for primary and post-primary schools across the country and the 4-year horizon will enable increased lead-in times for planning and delivery of the necessary infrastructure.

In addition to the new schools announced, there will be a need for further school accommodation in other areas in the future. Based on the current analysis, this need can be addressed through either planned capacity increases in existing schools or additional accommodation or extensions to existing schools. Approximately 40% of school places are delivered by extending existing schools, rather than by building new schools.

I have highlighted that the requirement for new schools will be kept under on-going review

and in particular would have regard for the increased roll-out of housing provision as outlined in Project Ireland 2040.

Schools Building Projects Status

380. Deputy Darragh O'Brien asked the Minister for Education and Skills the measures he is taking to resolve the chronic shortage of primary school places in Balbriggan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24952/18]

386. Deputy Darragh O'Brien asked the Minister for Education and Skills the measures he is taking to resolve the chronic shortage of secondary school places in Balbriggan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24958/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 380 and 383 together.

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 Balbriggan is located in the Balbriggan school planning area.

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

In addition to the new schools announced, there will be a need for further school accommodation in other areas in the future. Based on the current analysis, this need can be addressed through either planned capacity increases in existing schools or additional accommodation or extensions to existing schools.

I have highlighted that the requirement for new schools will be kept under on-going review and in particular would have regard for the increased roll-out of housing provision as outlined in Project Ireland 2040.

In September 2014, Coláiste Ghlor na Mara, a new 700 pupil multi-denominational post-primary school under the patronage An Foras Patrúnachta, was established to serve the Balbriggan school planning area. In addition, in September 2016, Bremore Educate Together Secondary School, a new 700 pupil multi-denominational post-primary school, was also established to serve this school planning area.

Schools Building Projects Status

381. Deputy Darragh O'Brien asked the Minister for Education and Skills the measures he is taking to resolve the chronic shortage of primary school places in Rush; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24953/18]

383. Deputy Darragh O'Brien asked the Minister for Education and Skills the measures he is taking to resolve the chronic shortage of primary school places in Lusk; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24955/18]

388. Deputy Darragh O'Brien asked the Minister for Education and Skills the measures

he is taking to resolve the chronic shortage of secondary school places in Rush; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24960/18]

389. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the measures he is taking to resolve the chronic shortage of secondary school places in Lusk; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24961/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 381, 383, 388 and 389 together.

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 Rush and Lusk are both located in the Rush and Lusk school planning area.

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

In addition to the new schools announced, there will be a need for further school accommodation in other areas in the future. Based on the current analysis, this need can be addressed through either planned capacity increases in existing schools or additional accommodation or extensions to existing schools.

I have highlighted that the requirement for new schools will be kept under on-going review and in particular would have regard for the increased roll-out of housing provision as outlined in Project Ireland 2040.

As the Deputy may be aware, in September 2013, Lusk Community College, a new 1,000 pupil multi-denominational post-primary school under the patronage of Dublin and Dún Laoghaire Education and Training Board, was established to serve this school planning area.

School Accommodation Provision

382. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the measures he is taking to resolve the chronic shortage of primary school places in Skerries; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24954/18]

390. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the measures he is taking to resolve the chronic shortage of secondary school places in Skerries; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24962/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 382 and 390 together.

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 Skerries is located in the Skerries school planning area.

As the Deputy will be aware, I announced plans for the establishment of 42 new schools over the next four years (2019 to 2022). This announcement follows nationwide demographic exercises carried out by my Department into the future need for primary and post-primary schools across the country and the 4-year horizon will enable increased lead-in times for plan-

ning and delivery of the necessary infrastructure.

In addition to the new schools announced, there will be a need for further school accommodation in other areas in the future. Based on the current analysis, this need can be addressed through either planned capacity increases in existing schools or additional accommodation or extensions to existing schools. Approximately 40% of school places are delivered by extending existing schools, rather than by building new schools.

I have highlighted that the requirement for new schools will be kept under on-going review and in particular would have regard for the increased roll-out of housing provision as outlined in Project Ireland 2040.

Question No. 383 answered with Question No. 381.

Question No. 384 answered with Question No. 377.

Question No. 385 answered with Question No. 378.

Question No. 386 answered with Question No. 380.

Question No. 387 answered with Question No. 379.

Questions Nos. 388 and 389 answered with Question No. 381.

Question No. 390 answered with Question No. 382.

Capitation Grants

391. Deputy Bobby Aylward asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding an increase to the school capitation grant to primary schools in counties Carlow and Kilkenny; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24968/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I recognise the need to improve capitation funding for all schools, including primary schools in Counties Carlow and Kilkenny, 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.

Technological Universities

392. Deputy Michael McGrath asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position on the planned technological university for Munster; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24969/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): It is a matter for the relevant Institutes of Technology in a consortium to lead on the progression of their plans to seek designation as a technological university. Currently, four such consortia are at different stages of development, dependent on their particular circumstances.

Together with the Tánaiste, the Minister of State for Higher Education met the Presidents and Chairs of Cork Institute of Technology and Institute of Technology Tralee last month and was informed that both institutes are fully committed to the Munster Technological University (MTU) project and that substantial progress is being made. In this context the MTU project management office is fully operational and meets weekly with regular updates being presented to both governing bodies. The MTU business case and revised economic impact study are nearing completion.

It is understood to currently be the intention of the MTU consortium to submit an application for TU designation under the Technological Universities Act later this year.

School Patronage

393. Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher asked the Minister for Education and Skills the rationale for considering a school (details supplied) as a candidate school for public consultation as part of the multidenominational and non-denominational schools consultation plan 2018; if requests were made to include the school on this list; the timeframe for this process; the procedures involved in determining the view of the parents and broader school community; if this process will delay the project of delivering a new school building for the school; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24989/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): As the Deputy will be aware, in January, 2017, I announced new plans aimed at providing more multi-denominational and non-denominational schools across the country, in line with the choices of parents, families and school communities and the Programme for Government commitment of reaching 400 such schools by 2030.

For clarity, this new Schools Reconfiguration for Diversity process is entirely separate to the delivery of projects for any particular school in a survey area and will not affect the school building project to which the Deputy refers.

The Schools Reconfiguration for Diversity process involves the Education and Training Boards (ETBs) in the initial phase, as the State's local education authorities, identifying areas where there is likely to be demand for greater diversity and working with their local City/County Childcare Committees to establish evidence of this demand among the cohort of pre-school parents.

As part of this process, surveys of the parents of pre-school children commenced from 24th May 2018 in 16 areas across the country - one pilot has been identified by each of the 16 ETBs – including the area in which the school referred to by the Deputy is located.

As part of this survey process, a list of primary schools (including details such as the school's name, location, patron, language and enrolment numbers) which are considered as serving the area/town that is being surveyed, is included on the survey instrument for information purposes

only for parents.

ETBs will analyse the survey results and determine the extent of demand for multi-denominational or non-denominational education in each area. This will form the basis of discussions with the majority patron (the Catholic Bishop in most cases) concerning the transfer of patronage of an existing school to meet that demand. Each ETB will then draw up a comprehensive report on the position in relation to each of the 16 pilot areas for submission to the Department of Education and Skills, which will subsequently publish the reports.

It is planned that, following the publication of the reports, the Schools Reconfiguration for Diversity process will move into the Implementation Phase, involving existing patrons consulting with their local school communities on accommodating the demand for diversity by transferring patronage of an existing school to a new multi-/non-denominational patron.

The new process supporting transfers of schools to multi-denominational patrons in response to the wishes of local families is based around principles of transparency and cooperation. Therefore, there will be a very substantial level of consultation of local communities in the process, both with the ETBs in the initial phase to establish evidence of demand by consulting pre-school parents and subsequently through the requirement for the existing patron to consult with local community and school interests in proposing to transfer patronage of an existing school to an alternative patron body. In that process, proposals from all prospective multi-denominational patrons that wish to be considered will be taken into account.

This process is entirely separate to the delivery of projects for any particular school in the survey area and will not affect the school building project to which the Deputy refers.

Summer Works Scheme

394. Deputy Patrick O'Donovan asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his Department will be accepting new applications for the summer works scheme 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24999/18]

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

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

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

Furthermore, the Department intends to engage with the relevant education partners in relation to giving schools a better lead-in period for planning and delivering projects under the summer works scheme from 2019 onwards. While the Summer Works Scheme is hugely successful in enabling small scale refurbishment works to be done on a devolved basis, the Department considers that the operation of the scheme could be improved by providing a better lead-in period for schools rather than in Quarter 2 as in previous years. This will also help ensure that

works done under the Summer Works Scheme fit better with any wider refurbishment/energy retrofit plans that may be done at schools under the increased funding provided in the National Development Plan. The engagement with education partners will commence shortly and will assist in developing a better timeline for the planning and delivery of summer works projects for 2019 onwards.

Minor Works Scheme

395. Deputy John Brassil asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will examine the minor works scheme with a view to providing the grant on an annual basis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25002/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Minor Works Grant was introduced in 1997 and since then has issued to primary schools each school year with the exception of the 2012/2013 school year. The payment of the Minor Works Grant is not confined to any particular date and can be issued during any month of the school year. For the 2002/2003 school year, part of the grant was paid in May 2003, with the balance in October 2003. The grant in respect of the 2017/2018 school year issued in December 2017.

It is intended that the Minor Works Grant in respect of the 2018/2019 school year will issue no later than January 2019.

My Department recognises the importance of the Minor Works Grant to primary schools. The National Development Plan 2018-2027 signals a gradual ramping up in capital expenditure in the schools sector over the coming years. In that context, and as part of our longer term infrastructural planning, my Department would intend to put the Minor Works Grant on an annual footing and to provide greater certainty to schools on the timing of payments.

School Catchment Areas

396. Deputy Joan Burton asked the Minister for Education and Skills the catchment area for the new Educate Together school in Harold's Cross, Dublin 6; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that children living on the opposite side of the road are not included; if the catchment area will be reviewed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25008/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): As the Deputy will be aware, in November 2016, I announced the patronage of a new 1,000 pupil post-primary school to be established in 2018 to serve the Dublin South City Centre area. This new school, which will be a co-educational, multi-denominational school under the patronage of Educate Together, will serve the Dublin 8 school planning area, along with the Dublin 2_Dublin 4 and Dublin 6_Clonskeagh school planning areas as a regional solution.

More recently, in April 2018, I announced plans for the establishment of 42 new schools over the next four years (2019 to 2022), including new post-primary schools for areas adjacent to Dublin 8 and Dublin 12 as follows:

- new 1,000 pupil post-primary school to be established in 2020 as a regional solution to serve the Dublin 6_Clonskeagh and Dublin_6W school planning areas.
- new 600 pupil post-primary school to be established in 2021 to serve the Dublin 2_Dublin 4 school planning area.

These new schools will further reduce pressure on schools in the adjacent school planning areas, including the Dublin 8 and 12 areas. A patronage process, which will be open to all patron bodies, will be run by my Department to decide who will operate these schools.

Special Educational Needs Service Provision

397. Deputy Kathleen Funchion asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to increase funding for SNA provision in a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25010/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) is responsible 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.

In considering applications for SNA support for individual pupils, the NCSE 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.

My Department's policy is to ensure that every child who is assessed as needing SNA support will receive access to such support. In line with this policy, I announced last month that 800 additional SNAs 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.

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 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 support to the school to meet the special educational and/or care needs of the children concerned.

I understand an appeal from the school in question has not been received by the NCSE to date.

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 a particular school, I have referred the question to the NCSE for their direct reply.

Multidenominational Schools

398. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the stage plans are at for the proposed location and timeframe in providing a new Educate Together school for Arklow, County Wicklow as previously announced under the process to bring about more diversity and inclusiveness in the primary school system; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25094/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): As the Deputy will be aware, I have announced new plans aimed at accelerating the provision of multi-denominational and non-denominational schools across the country, in line with the choices of parents, families and school communities and the Programme for Government commitment to reach 400 such schools by 2030.

I would point out that the previous model of patronage divestment yielded only a very limited number of schools for transfer to multi-denominational patrons (10 since 2013). I believe that the new schools reconfiguration for diversity process has the potential to significantly increase patron diversity in our school system.

While these new structures are being introduced, my Department will continue to work with the main stakeholders to progress delivery of diversity in areas already identified, including Arklow.

Gaeltacht Policy

399. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the way the capacity of professional and administrative personnel within his Department including inspectors, psychologists, speech and language therapists, occupational therapists and staff in school support services to deliver services through Irish in Gaeltacht schools has been increased in 2017 and to date 2018 as outlined in the Policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022; the number of additional staff in each category that have been tasked to deliver services through Irish; and the costs which have been incurred from the promotion of such increased capacity. [25119/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): In 2017, the Gaeltacht Education Unit was established in my Department to oversee and support the implementation of the Policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022. This Unit is staffed by a four-member team, all of whom can deliver a service through Irish. A team of 7 Inspectors, who have also been currently assigned to the Unit on the part-time basis, are providing advisory support through Irish to schools participating in the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme.

To support the implementation of the Policy, provision has also been made for 2 additional Education Officer posts in An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta & Gaelscolaíochta (COGG) who are delivering CPD through the medium of Irish to schools participating in the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme.

Primary and post-primary schools participating in the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme can also access additional part-time language support hours equivalent to 30 whole time equivalent (WTE) primary teachers and 10 WTE post-primary teachers from September 2018. Also,

in September 2018, an additional teacher is being allocated to each of 2 post-primary schools under Forás, which is a pilot Irish-language development programme aimed at supporting certain junior-cycle students in their transition to Irish-medium education.

To work towards increasing the number of primary and post-primary teachers who can provide high quality Irish-medium education and enhancing existing capacity, a number of other initiatives have also been commenced to support the implementation of the Gaeltacht Policy. To date, these include provision for two additional teaching posts on the Professional Masters in Education at NUIG.

The implementation of the pre-pilot phase of an e-hub project is also at an advanced stage. The purpose of the e-Hub pilot project is to connect a number of small Irish-medium schools or Irish-medium units in Gaeltacht areas so as to extend the range of curricular choices in an online environment through the medium of Irish available to post-primary students, particularly at senior cycle, in these schools. An invitation to apply for two part-time e-Teacher posts of Leaving Certificate Higher-Level Physics to participate in this e-Hub Pilot Project has recently issued to Gaeltacht and all-Irish post-primary schools.

In budget 2018, the Government doubled the investment being made in Gaeltacht education. A budgetary allocation of €2.3m was provided for the implementation of the Policy on Gaeltacht Education in 2018.

To support the provision of a service through Irish by the Department of Education and Skills an Irish Information Line has been put in place. The number of staff assigned to answering the dedicated Irish Information Line has increased by 3 since April 2017.

The National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) currently employ 24 educational psychologists that are proficient in the Irish language. At the Schools Inspectorate Division at primary level there are 11 inspectors who have schools in Gaeltacht areas as part of their district. Inspectors at primary level have sufficient proficiency to evaluate the teaching and learning of Irish in primary schools. At post-primary level, the inspectors are in the main specialists in subject areas and post-primary inspectors also provides services to schools that teach the curriculum through Irish including Gaeltacht schools.

In both the Junior Cycle for Teachers support service (JCT) and the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) there has been an increase of 4 additional advisors in each of these two support services since January 2017 who have been tasked to deliver services through Irish.

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) has 22 Visiting Teachers, 6 advisors, 1 Speech and Language Therapist, 1 Occupational Therapist, 2 Special Education Needs Organisers and 1 administrative staff member who specifically deliver services in Irish when required. The NCSE currently have a number of additional teaching staff seconded to them who are mainly primary school teachers who are proficient in Irish. This cohort of staff joined the NCSE in March 2017 as part of the transition of National Behaviour Support Service (NBSS) and Special Education Support Service (SESS) services to the NCSE.

Questions relating to the provision of speech and language therapy through the HSE primary care service should be directed to the Minister for Health.

Third Level Admissions Assistance

400. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when a HEAR ap-

plication will be granted to a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25126/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): HEAR is a college and university admissions scheme offering places on reduced points and extra college support to school leavers from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

The HEAR scheme is operated by the Irish Universities Association (IUA) and regulated by individual higher education institutions. My Department plays no role in the assessment and award of places under the scheme.

The operational management of HEAR was transferred from the Shared Services Unit in the IUA to the Central Applications Office (CAO) in November 2016. Any queries in relation to admission through the HEAR scheme should be directed to the CAO at <http://www.cao.ie>.

Further details on the various access routes is available at: <http://www.cao.ie/index.php?page=accessroutes>

Contact details in each of the participating colleges is available at: <http://accesscollege.ie/hear/contact-a-hearhei/>

Apprenticeship Programmes

401. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if in the development of a healthcare assistance apprentice programme an organisation (details supplied) will be centrally involved in the development and implementation of it; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25145/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan): A Healthcare Assistant apprenticeship is currently in development following the most recent call for proposals issued by the Apprenticeship Council. Each consortium submitting proposals for the development of an apprenticeship must ensure that there is a broad range of employer representation on the consortium along with education partners to enable the apprenticeship to be rolled out as a national programme. There is currently engagement between the Apprenticeship Council, the healthcare assistant consortium and key stakeholders to ensure the widest possible employer take-up of the apprenticeship.

Oideachas Gaeilge

402. D'fhiadfraigh **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** den Aire Oideachais agus Scileanna an dtábharrfaidh sé freagra ar litir thíosluaithe (sonraí tugtha); agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [25147/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Is féidir liom a dheimhniú go bhfuair m'oifig do chomhfhreagras agus mo leithscéal as an moill le freagra a chur chugat a tharla de bharr neamairt riarracháin.

Is féidir liom a chur in iúl duit, áfach, go bhfuil na chéad fhiosruithe déanta ag oifigigh ó mo Roinn maidir leis an ábhar atá ardaithe agat sa chomhfhreagras a chuir tú agus beifear i dteagháil leat go luath.

403. Deputy Kathleen Funchion asked the Minister for Education and Skills if provision has been made for students taking a junior certificate subject with a compulsory assessment component in which the subject is not offered within the student's own school and is thus studied externally; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25159/18]

404. Deputy Kathleen Funchion asked the Minister for Education and Skills if provision has been made for the assessment of students in junior certificate music that are home schooled. [25160/18]

405. Deputy Kathleen Funchion asked the Minister for Education and Skills if provision has been made for assessment of students studying junior certificate music external to their own school. [25161/18]

406. Deputy Kathleen Funchion asked the Minister for Education and Skills if guidelines have or will be released to education providers regarding the practical assessment of junior certificate subjects in which these subjects are studied externally to the students' school. [25162/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 403 to 406, inclusive, together.

The Junior Cycle Framework presents a dual approach to assessment that supports student learning over the three years of junior cycle and also measures achievement at the end of those three years. This dual approach reduces the focus on one externally assessed examination as a means of assessing students and increases the prominence given to classroom-based assessment and formative assessment, providing a more rounded assessment of the education of each young person. This change of emphasis arises from an acknowledgement that students learn best when teachers provide feedback that helps students to understand how their learning can be improved. As part of the phasing in of the new Framework for Junior Cycle the new Junior Cycle music specification will be introduced to schools from September 2018.

The Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA) is a school based award issued by recognised schools which draws upon and reports on achievement across all elements of assessment including ongoing, formative assessment and Classroom-Based Assessments by teachers, as well as State Examinations marked by the State Examinations Commission. The assessment of a number of practical subjects including music for the purposes of the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA) will comprise two Classroom-Based Assessments undertaken in recognised schools, a practical examination and a written examination.

Where students take extra subjects outside of their school setting these subjects cannot satisfy the requirements for ongoing, formative assessment by recognised schools and cannot, therefore, be included as part of the JCPA. Students who wish to study additional subjects, such as music, outside of their school have a number of other certification avenues open to them.

Student Grant Scheme

407. Deputy Sean Fleming asked the Minister for Education and Skills the funding available for a student (details supplied) who studies abroad; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25169/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): SUSI grant funding is

available for approved undergraduate courses in approved higher education institutions within the EU. No maintenance funding is available for postgraduate courses abroad.

Some high end courses abroad have an integrated undergraduate and postgraduate element. For these courses, SUSI may issue maintenance grants during the undergraduate element of the course but will not provide any support for the postgraduate element.

Further details of the funding available for integrated masters' courses within the EU, is available on the SUSI website at:

<https://susi.ie/eligibility/student-studying-outside-the-state/approved-institutionscourses-for-students-studying-outside-the-state/>

Commencement of Legislation

408. Deputy Mattie McGrath asked the Minister for Education and Skills the sections and parts of all legislation brought forward by his Department in each of the past four years that have yet to be commenced; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25176/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Since 2014, the following pieces of legislation have been enacted in my area:

- Education (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2015
- Teaching Council (Amendment) Act 2015
- Technological Universities Act 2018

In relation to these Acts, the only sections which have yet to be commenced are the following sections of the Technological Universities Act 2018: Sections 65(a), 68, 69, 70, 76, 77, 79, 80(b), 82, 83, 84, 85, 91, 92 and 94. All other sections of that Act were commenced on 24 April 2018.

Summer Works Scheme

409. Deputy Sean Fleming asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding funding to carry out renovations at a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25195/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I can confirm to the Deputy that the school in question submitted an application for significant capital funding to undertake renovation works at the school.

The Deputy will be aware that my Department's current priority, within the limited funding available, is the provision of essential classroom accommodation in areas where significant demographic need has been established to ensure that each child will have access to a physical school place. The Deputy will therefore appreciate that all applications for capital funding must be considered in the context of the existing challenging financial circumstances where funding must be prioritised for this purpose and to provide mainstream classroom accommodation where additional teachers are being appointed.

The school currently operates with a principal and four mainstream teachers and I understand that with the reduction in enrolment level at the school, that this warrants a staffing of

principal and three mainstream teachers for the 2018/2019 school year.

The nature of the works included in the school's application indicate that they are appropriate for consideration under the Summer Works Scheme (SWS). It will be open to the school, if it so decides, to make an application for funding under future SWS. The purpose of the SWS is to devolve funding to individual school authorities to undertake small and medium scale improvement works that will upgrade existing school facilities, which can be carried out during the summer months or at other times that avoid disrupting the operation of the school. The scheme is designed to address necessary and immediate works within the funding available. My Department has no record of receiving any application from the school in question under the SWS in recent years.

Alternatively, the school may use its minor works to carry out the works in full or on a phased basis as the grant permits, if the school considers the works to be a priority.

My Department has written directly to the school to clarify the position.

Third Level Staff Remuneration

410. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the remuneration packages for presidents of third level institutions in tabular form. [25196/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): A table detailing the remuneration packages for third level institution presidents, as requested by the Deputy, follows.

Third Level Institutions	Salaries
UCD	€191,117
UCC	€197,254
NUIG	€199,184
MU	€186,836
TCD	€198,574
UL	€191,103
DCU	€191,102
DIT	€186,836
CIT	€154,664
GMIT	€154,664
WIT	€154,664
ITT	€149,931
ITB	€149,931
IADT	€149,931
IT Dundalk	€149,931
IT Carlow	€149,931
IT Sligo	€149,931
IT Letterkenny	€149,931
IT Tralee	€149,931
IT Limerick	€149,931
IT Athlone	€149,931

Schools Amalgamation

411. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will provide the policy document outlining the procedures relating to DEIS status and the amalgamation of national schools, particularly the process whereby non-DEIS and DEIS schools are amalgamated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25220/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I wish to advise the Deputy that where school amalgamations occurred comprising of DEIS and non-DEIS schools, the practice has been for DEIS status not to transfer to the newly amalgamated school. However, in accordance with the approach adopted in relation to all such amalgamations, my Department continues to provide additional non-teaching resources in respect of eligible pupils from the former DEIS school by way of continued support for the targeted cohort of pupils as a transitional measure. In the case of a primary school these supports continue to be supplied for 8 years following the amalgamation.

These arrangements in respect of school amalgamations were put in place as an interim measure pending a review of the DEIS programme by my Department. This Review was completed in 2016 and the follow-on updated DEIS Plan was published in early 2017.

The identification of schools for receipt of additional resources under the DEIS programme is informed by a scientific data based model which assesses levels of disadvantage in individual schools based on the pupil cohort of the school.

A detailed document explaining the methodology used in the Identification process is available on my Department's website at <https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/DEIS-Delivering-Equality-of-Opportunity-in-Schools-/DEIS-Identification-Process.pdf>

An update of the DEIS Identification process 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. A detailed quality assurance process in respect of this is currently being carried out.

A policy document in relation to the amalgamations of DEIS and non DEIS schools will be developed once the detailed quality assurance process is completed but it is important to note that the aim is to provide the necessary supports so that resources are matched to identified need of the existing pupil cohort.

Schools Building Projects Status

412. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding completion of a site acquisition and the process for commencing the pre-qualification process in respect of a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25229/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Legal representatives for both parties are working together with a view to concluding the conveyancing. All parties are working to ensure the acquisition completes at the earliest possible date and at this point it is not anticipated that the completion of conveyancing will impact on the timelines for delivery of the building project.

In regard to the pre-qualification process, authorisation was issued to the school's Design Team on 22nd May 2018 to commence this process in order to draw up short-lists of contractors for the project. Pre-qualification normally takes between 8 and 12 weeks to complete. When

pre-qualification is complete the project will then be progressed to tender stage.

Schools Building Projects Status

413. Deputy Pat Casey asked the Minister for Education and Skills the additional measures being undertaken to ensure that a school (details supplied) will be moved into its new premises by September 2018 in view of the liquidation of a company; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25232/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The company referred to by the Deputy had a part in a tender for the completion of construction of the Schools Bundle 5 PPP project, following the liquidation of Carillion Construction Ltd. Schools Bundle 5 encompasses five school buildings and one further education college across four sites in Bray, Wexford, Carlow and Kells, including the school referred to by the Deputy.

This tender process is at an advanced stage. However, the examinership and subsequent liquidation of the company referred to by the Deputy has added complexity to the process of confirming the arrangements for completion of the Schools Bundle 5 schools. These arrangements are currently being worked through by the Dutch Infrastructure Fund (DIF), which represents the PPP company, and the Project Funders, in close consultation with the National Development Finance Agency (NDFA) and the Department of Education and Skills. The Project Funders anticipate that the pathway forward to completion of the schools will become clearer within the next week or so. The school authorities are being advised of developments on a regular basis.

It is still the case that the schools which are closest to completion, including the school referred to by the Deputy, remain best positioned to be finished for September and all efforts are being made to achieve this. The Department is also working with the school authorities on any necessary contingency arrangements for September.

Schools Building Projects Status

414. Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly asked the Minister for Education and Skills the impact of the liquidation of a company (details supplied) on the completion of schools bundle 5 public private partnership, PPP, project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25256/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The company referred to by the Deputy had a part in a tender for the completion of construction of the Schools Bundle 5 PPP project, following the liquidation of Carillion Construction Ltd. Schools Bundle 5 encompasses five school buildings and one further education college across four sites in Bray, Wexford, Carlow and Kells.

The examinership and subsequent liquidation of the company referred to by the Deputy has added complexity to the process of confirming the arrangements for completion of the Schools Bundle 5 schools. Nonetheless, the tender process is at an advanced stage and the arrangements are currently being worked through by the Dutch Infrastructure Fund (DIF), which represents the PPP company, as well as the Project Funders, in close consultation with the National Development Finance Agency (NDFA) and the Department of Education and Skills. The Project Funders anticipate that the pathway forward to completion of the schools will become clearer within the next week or so. The school authorities are being advised of developments on a regular basis.

It is still the case that the schools which are closest to completion remain best positioned to be finished for September and all efforts are being made to achieve this. The Department is also working with the school authorities on any necessary contingency arrangements for September.

Adoptive Leave

415. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if provision has been made for male teachers in a same-sex partnerships seeking adoptive leave from his Department. [25325/18]

416. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his attention has been drawn to his Department's circular 18/2013 outlining adoptive leave practice and entitlements for teachers in which sections 1.2 and 11 do not appear to provide for a male teacher in a same-sex partnership seeking adoptive leave; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25326/18]

417. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if an updated policy will be published by his Department which will include provisions for male teachers in same-sex partnerships seeking adoptive leave. [25327/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to answer Questions Nos. 415 to 417, inclusive, together.

Section 6 of the Adoptive Leave Act 1995 provides for an entitlement to 24 weeks Adoptive Leave for an employed adopting mother or a sole male adopter.

Following the 34th amendment to the Constitution and its subsequent legislative changes, the Department of Justice and Equality has prepared draft legislative proposals amending the Adoptive Leave Act which will afford the same entitlements to Adoptive Leave and Benefits to all couples who are married, co-habiting or who are in a civil partnership, irrespective of gender.

The Department of Justice and Equality is currently reviewing how best to advance these legislative proposals and my Department will review the terms and conditions of employment of teachers as soon as the Adoptive Leave Act is amended.

Student Assistance Fund

418. **Deputy Jan O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the potential costs and considerations of setting up a student assistance fund specifically for the benefit of post-graduate students in view of the fact that they do not have access to the student assistance fund; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25353/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Student Assistance Fund (SAF) is managed by the Higher Education Authority on behalf of the Department of Education and Skills. The Fund is allocated annually to the universities, the institutes of technology, the colleges of education and a number of other higher education institutions.

The SAF is designed to support students in third-level institutions who are experiencing exceptional financial need. This Fund assists students, in a sensitive and compassionate manner, who might otherwise be unable to continue their third level studies due to their financial circumstances.

The SAF is available to anyone in higher education undertaking a full-time course of not less than one year who will be awarded an undergraduate or postgraduate qualification on completion of the course.

The fund was recently extended to part-time students following the allocation of an additional €1m in Budget 2017. The current SAF allocation for the 2017/18 academic year is €9.1 million.

Schools Refurbishment

419. Deputy John Lahart asked the Minister for Education and Skills the contact he has had with a school (details supplied) in relation to works that need to be carried out; when the work is expected to start; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25367/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I wish to advise the Deputy that my Department has been engaging with the school in question in the context of proposed insulation works at the school. The school has submitted cost estimates for the proposed works and these are currently being considered. My Department will be in further contact with the school authorities shortly.

Schools Site Acquisitions

420. Deputy John Lahart asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding a proposed site for a school (details supplied); if a site has been purchased; if so, the details of the purchase; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25368/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I am pleased to inform the Deputy that my Department has agreed to acquire a site located at Ballycullen Road (East), Oldcourt, D16 for the school to which he refers. Contracts have been signed, subject to planning.

The landowner has recently applied for planning permission for development on his lands including outline planning permission for school accommodation.

The patron of the school referred to by the Deputy has recently been informed of the proposed location.

School Transport Provision

421. Deputy Brian Stanley asked the Minister for Education and Skills the provision being made for school transport to convey children with disabilities and special needs to preschools that have the capacity and trained staff to cater for them in cases in which such facilities do not exist in the towns in which they reside. [25431/18]

422. Deputy Brian Stanley asked the Minister for Education and Skills if transport or assistance towards transport for three children with special needs and disabilities will be provided (details supplied). [25432/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 421 and 422 together.

School transport is a significant operation managed by Bus Éireann on behalf of the Depart-

ment.

Currently over 116,000 children, including over 12,000 children with special educational needs, are being transported in over 4,500 vehicles on a daily basis to primary and post-primary schools throughout the country covering over 100 million kilometres annually at a total cost of almost €190 million in 2017.

Under the terms of my Department's School Transport Scheme for Children with Special Educational Needs, children are eligible for school transport where they are attending the nearest recognised: mainstream school, special class/special school or a unit, that is or can be resourced, to meet their special educational needs.

Eligibility is determined following consultation with the National Council for Special Education through its network of Special Education Needs Organisers.

The pre-school referred to by the Deputy is not a recognised school and is not funded by my Department, therefore the children in question are not eligible for school transport under the terms of the above scheme.

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

Schools Building Projects Applications

423. Deputy David Cullinane asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a funding application from a school (details supplied) for the replacement of prefabs to cater for a staff room, an additional special education room, a principal's office and a physical education hall will be granted; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25434/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I wish to advise the Deputy that the application for capital funding from the school in question is currently under consideration and a decision will be conveyed to the school authority shortly.

I can confirm that my Department has approved temporary accommodation, as an interim measure, to facilitate the establishment of an ASD class in the school for September 2018. The installation of this temporary accommodation has been devolved to the Board of Management for delivery.

School Accommodation Provision

424. Deputy Willie Penrose asked the Minister for Education and Skills if consequent to the carrying out of the M4-N4 corridor study pertaining to the provision of secondary school accommodation, if a further evaluation of the findings have been made in the interim; if the provision of secondary school accommodation for Kinnegad will be considered due to significant population increases; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25453/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): My Department's means of analysing demographic trends and data have changed considerably since the report to which the Deputy refers was completed in 2005.

In order to plan for school provision and analyse the relevant demographic data, my Department divides the country into 314 school planning areas and uses a Geographical Information System, using data from a range of sources, to identify where the pressure for school places

across the country will arise. With this information, my Department carries out nationwide demographic exercises to determine where additional school accommodation is needed at primary and post-primary level.

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

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

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

In addition to the new schools announced, there will be a need for further school accommodation in other areas in the future. Based on the current analysis, this need can be addressed through either planned capacity increases in existing schools or additional accommodation or extensions to existing schools.

While the announcement did not include a new post-primary school in Kinnegad (which is located in the Killucan school planning area), I have highlighted that the requirement for new schools will be kept under on-going review and in particular would have regard for the increased roll-out of housing provision as outlined in Project Ireland 2040.

Student Grant Scheme Eligibility

425. Deputy Kathleen Funchion asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated cost of reducing the current residency criteria for access to the SUSI grant from three to two of the past five years. [25454/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): To be eligible for a grant, a “student”, as defined in Section 14 of the Student Support Act 2011, must demonstrate that he/she has been resident in the State for at least 3 years out of the 5 year period ending on the day before the start of his/her approved course of study.

This requirement takes cognisance of students who wish to take time out to travel or work abroad. Such students can still meet the residency requirement if they have not been outside the State for more than two of the previous five years. It is also possible for students, who did not meet the residency requirement at the commencement of their studies, to have their eligibility reviewed if they meet the residency requirement during the course of their studies.

Similar and in some cases more restrictive residency requirements apply in other EU Member States. For example, in the UK a student must be resident for the three years prior to commencing his/her studies. In Denmark, a student has to be resident for five years prior to commencing studies.

It is not possible to cost a proposal to reduce the residency requirement to two out of five years. Reducing the residency requirement will attract additional students, including other EU

students not currently resident in the State, who currently don't apply to SUSI. As such, it is difficult to predict what the impact of such a change would be.

Student Grant Scheme Expenditure

426. Deputy Kathleen Funchion asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated cost of assessing all students aged 18 to 23 years of age, that is, not exclusively those estranged from their parents, as independent for the purpose of the SUSI grant system provided they meet all other eligibility criteria. [25455/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Treating every student as independent would in almost all cases, remove the targeting of funding at those most in need of support and result in every full-time student meeting the means test criteria.

It is difficult to accurately cost this proposal as it would require information not currently available, on all full-time students up to the age of 23. However, it is possible to make a general estimate of the cost of this proposal as follows:

In 2016/17, SUSI awarded grants to circa 79,000 students. The annual cost of the scheme in 2017 was €371m. This equates to an average grant of €4,700.

In 2016/17, the number of full-time students was 212,579, made up of 31,969 PLC students, 157,518 undergraduate students and 23,092 postgraduate students. 79,000 of these students receive a grant with 133,579 not qualifying for support.

Assuming that all additional 133,579 full-time students will qualify for an average grant of €4,700, then the cost would be in excess of €625m.

The above estimate assumes that every student is aged between 18 and 23 years. It also assumes that every student will meet all other SUSI qualifying criteria such as nationality, residency and prior academic attainment.

School Transport Eligibility

427. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Education and Skills if the decision to refuse school transport in the case of a person (details supplied) will be reviewed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25465/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan): School transport is a significant operation managed by Bus Éireann on behalf of the Department.

Currently over 116,000 children, including over 12,000 children with special educational needs, are being transported in over 4,500 vehicles on a daily basis to primary and post-primary schools throughout the country covering over 100 million kilometres annually at a total cost of almost €190 million in 2017.

Under the terms of my Department's School Transport Scheme for Children with Special Educational Needs, children are eligible for transport where they:

- have special educational needs arising from a diagnosed disability in accordance with the designation of high and low incidence disability set out in Department of Education and Skill's

(DES) Circular 02/05

and

- are attending the nearest recognised: mainstream school, special class/special school or a unit, that is or can be resourced, to meet their special educational needs

Eligibility is determined following consultation with the National Council for Special Education through its network of Special Education Needs Organisers.

The child in question does not satisfy the above criteria and is therefore not eligible for school transport under the terms of the above scheme.

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

School Catchment Areas

428. Deputy Jan O'Sullivan asked the Minister for Education and Skills if the catchment area for the new Harold's Cross secondary school will be extended to include the Dublin 8 and 12 areas in which there are two MDS primary schools; the rationale for not including these areas, which are in the immediate environment of the school; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25543/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): As the Deputy will be aware, in November 2016, I announced the patronage of a new 1,000 pupil post-primary school to be established in 2018 to serve the Dublin South City Centre area. This new school, which will be a co-educational, multi-denominational school under the patronage of Educate Together, will serve the Dublin 8 school planning area, along with the Dublin 2-Dublin 4 and Dublin 6 Clonskeagh school planning areas as a regional solution.

More recently, in April 2018, I announced plans for the establishment of 42 new schools over the next four years (2019 to 2022), including new post-primary schools for areas adjacent to Dublin 8 and Dublin 12 as follows:

- new 1,000 pupil post-primary school to be established in 2020 as a regional solution to serve the Dublin 6 Clonskeagh and Dublin 6W school planning areas.

- new 600 pupil post-primary school to be established in 2021 to serve the Dublin 2-Dublin 4 school planning area.

A patronage process, which will be open to all patron bodies, will be run by my Department to decide who will operate these schools.

These new schools will further reduce pressure on schools in the adjacent school planning areas, including the Dublin 8 and 12 areas.

Junior Cycle Reform

429. Deputy Jackie Cahill asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason his Department halved the junior cycle management resource hours available to schools for the 2018/2019 school year (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25544/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The allocation of junior

cycle management resource hours to schools is currently under consideration.

Departmental Funding

430. Deputy Jonathan O'Brien asked the Minister for Education and Skills his Department's capital allocation in each of the years 2019 to 2023; and the areas to which funds will be allocated in each of those years. [25569/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): My Department's capital allocation for the years 2019 to 2022 is as follows:

2019 - €941m

2020 - €942m

2021 - €1,006m

2022 - €1,100m

The capital funding available to my Department for the years 2019 to 2021 has been allocated across the various sectors as set out in the attachment.

The National Development Plan signalled a capital allocation of €1.1 billion for the Department of Education and Skills in 2022. However, this total has not yet been allocated across individual capital subheads. The capital allocation for 2023 has yet to be confirmed.

CAPITAL ALLOCATION 2019 - 2021

SECTOR	2019	2020	2021
	(€m)	(€m)	(€m)
Schools	622	592	617
Schools ICT Programme	50	50	49
Higher Education	90	109	138
Research	47.6	47.6	47.6
PPPs	112	119	120
Further Education	13	18	28
Other Programmes	6.4	6.4	6.4
TOTAL	941	942	1006

Schools Building Projects Status

431. Deputy John Lahart asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of schools projects that were to be delivered by way of PPP with a company (details supplied). [25585/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The PPP project referred to by the Deputy encompasses five school buildings and one further education college across four sites in Bray, Wexford, Carlow and Kells. This programme has been impacted by the liquidation of the company referred to by the Deputy. A tender process to identify a replacement contractor or contractors for the completion of the buildings in question and for facilities management services for the programme is at an advanced stage.

These tender arrangements are currently being worked through by the Dutch Infrastructure

Fund (DIF), which represents the PPP company, and the Project Funders, in close consultation with the National Development Finance Agency (NDFA) and the Department of Education and Skills. The Project Funders anticipate that the pathway forward to completion of the schools will become clearer within the next week or so. The school authorities are being advised of developments on a regular basis.

It is still the case that the schools which are closest to completion remain best positioned to be finished for September and all efforts are being made to achieve this. The Department is also working with the school authorities on any necessary contingency arrangements for September.

Schools Building Projects Status

432. Deputy John Lahart asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the provision of new school buildings for schools (details supplied). [25587/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The school building project referred to by the Deputy is progressing through Tender Stage. The tender documents issued on the 31st May 2018 with a tender return date of the 19th July 2018. It is anticipated that the project will proceed to construction in Quarter 4 of 2018.

Site Acquisitions

433. Deputy John Lahart asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the transfer of land from South Dublin County Council to his Department; and the progress that has been made in relation to progressing the school project. [25588/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): With regard to the land transfer from South Dublin County Council to my Department, it is expected that contracts will be exchanged shortly.

In the meantime the project is being progressed and the architectural planning process is underway.

School Patronage

434. Deputy Peadar Tóibín asked the Minister for Education and Skills when the new system for the awarding of a patronage to schools will be finalised in view of findings that the Education Act 1998 had been contravened by his Department in the process of appointing a patron to a new primary school in the Drumcondra, Marino and Dublin 1 areas; if he has examined the demand for multidenominational education through the medium of Irish in this area; and if the statutory language obligations will be adhered to in the process by which patronage is awarded with regard to the 42 schools due to be established in the next four years. [25594/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Following completion of the relevant patronage process, Educate Together was awarded patronage of the new school established to serve Drumcondra/Marino/Dublin 1 in 2016 – Gracepark ETNS opened in September 2016 and its patronage remains with Educate Together. In its April 2016 report to the Minister on the patronage process which included this new primary school, the New Schools Establishment Group (NSEG) noted the strong level of demand for Irish-medium education in the Drumcondra/Marino/Dublin 1 area and recommended that this would be kept under re-

view in the context of future demographic exercises. In this regard, following completion of nationwide demographic exercises, on 12 April 2018, the Minister announced the establishment of 42 new schools from 2019 -2022, including a new primary school to be established in September 2019 to serve the Drumcondra/Marino/Dublin 1 school planning area. In the context of the NSEG report, and given the strong level of parental demand for a Gaelscoil in the area evidenced as part of the 2016 patronage process, it would be recommended that this would be established as a Gaelscoil under the patronage of An Foras Pátrúnachta.

Regarding the Deputy's query on the patronage process generally, a patronage process is run after it has been decided, based on demographic analysis, that a new school is required. This patronage process is open to all patron bodies and prospective patrons. Parental preferences for each patron and language of instruction, from parents of children who reside in the school planning areas concerned, together with the extent of diversity currently available in these areas, are key to decisions in relation to the outcome of this process. In this regard, the development of a new Online Patronage Process System (OPPS) is currently being finalised by my Department to provide objective information to such parents which will allow them to make an informed choice about their preferred model of patronage and language of instruction for their child's education. Parental preferences were previously collected based on direct engagement with patron bodies.

My Department will subsequently compile a patronage report for the consideration of the New Schools Establishment Group (NSEG), an external independent advisory group which oversees the patronage process, and the NSEG will submit a report with recommendations my consideration.

Site Acquisitions

435. Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of plans to secure a permanent site for a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25603/18]

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

In this regard, my Department is currently engaging with Kildare Wicklow Education Training Board in the context of progressing a building project for the school and will keep the school patron informed of progress.

Special Educational Needs Staff

436. Deputy John Lahart asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reasons a school (details supplied) is having its special needs assistant withdrawn, leaving the school with none despite the fact there are three students with special needs starting the school in September 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25618/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) is responsible 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.

Questions - Written Answers

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.

In considering applications for SNA supports for individual pupils, the NCSE 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.

My Department's policy is to ensure that every child who is assessed as needing SNA support will receive access to such support. In line with this policy, I announced last month that 800 additional SNAs 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.

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 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 support 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 a particular school I have referred the question to the NCSE for their direct reply.

Schools Building Projects

437. Deputy Mick Barry asked the Minister for Education and Skills if officials from his Department will agree to meet the board of management of a school (details supplied) to discuss its request for a new school building. [25620/18]

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

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

The school has recently submitted an application to my Department for refurbishment works to provide a mainstream classroom to facilitate the appointment of an additional teaching post. This application is currently being considered by my Department and the school authorities will be advised of the position when the assessment process has concluded. Any meeting request should be sent to diary@education.gov.ie and all such requests are considered.

Ministerial Meetings

438. Deputy Seán Haughey asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to have a bilateral meeting with his US counterpart, Ms. Betsy DeVos; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25666/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I have no plans to meet with Ms DeVos at this time.

The USA is a key international education market for Ireland's higher education institutions with close to 12,000 students coming to study here under the US Study Abroad programme every year. These connections are providing significant opportunities for our HEIs to build longer term partnerships and collaborations with US institutions.

My Department officials and Education Ireland engage on an ongoing basis with the US market and, on foot of this, the Secretary General recently attended an international education event in Philadelphia where he met the Assistant Secretary of State for Educational and Cultural Affairs, Marie Royce, and her adviser. He also met with the Deputy Secretary of Post-Secondary and Higher Education of Pennsylvania during this visit.

Under our International Education Strategy, we will continue to build relations and partnerships with the American education system and its people.

School Accommodation

439. Deputy Eamon Scanlon asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of an additional school accommodation application by a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25681/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I can confirm to the Deputy that my Department received an application, within the last week, 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.

Question No. 440 answered with Question No. 285.

Site Acquisitions

441. Deputy Joan Burton asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a site for a new school (details supplied) in Dún Laoghaire will be urgently progressed; the status of progress to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25719/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): In relation to the school

referred to by the Deputy, a potential school site has been identified and my Department is engaging with the relevant stakeholders with a view to progressing matters.

Due to sensitivities relating to site acquisitions generally I am not in a position to provide further details at this time but I can assure the Deputy that the school patron will be informed of the proposed location for the school as soon as it is possible to do so.

EU Data

442. Deputy Michael McGrath asked the Minister for Education and Skills the EU fines paid in each of the years 2015 to 2017, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25731/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): My Department has not paid or been subject to any EU fines in the years referred to by the Deputy.

European Council Meetings

443. Deputy Micheál Martin asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if immigration will be discussed at the June 2018 European Council meeting in view of events that have occurred in Hungary and Germany. [24563/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The next European Council will take place on 28 and 29 June 2018. Migration is on the agenda and the meeting will likely take stock of progress on foot of the Conclusions of the 19 October 2017 European Council where the twenty-eight heads of state agreed that the EU's "comprehensive, pragmatic and resolute" migration strategy, which aims to restore control of external borders and to reduce arrivals and the number of deaths at sea, was bringing results and should be consolidated.

Measures to be taken included maintaining vigilance on all migratory routes and readiness to react to any new trends or developments, support for EU Member States directly affected or involved, strengthened cooperation with international partners, as well as countries of origin, transit and destination, adequate financing and an increase in effective returns, to reduce the incentives of irregular migration.

Further actions called for by the October 2017 European Council Conclusions include:

- Full cooperation with Turkey on migration, and the full implementation of the EU - Turkey Statement
- Enhanced returns and the further strengthening of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency
- Applying voluntary resettlement schemes
- Creating and applying the necessary leverage to achieve measurable results in terms of preventing illegal migration and returning irregular migrants.

The upcoming June European Council is expected to discuss the ongoing negotiations to reform the Common European Asylum System (CEAS). The October 2017 Conclusions specifically referenced the CEAS, stating that the European Council would seek to reach a consensus during the first half of 2018 and calling for further convergence towards an agreement which

strikes the right balance between responsibility and solidarity and ensures resilience to future crises. At present I am not aware of plans to discuss the migration situation in either Germany or Hungary.

Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission Reports

444. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he has met a family (details supplied) following the publishing of the GSOC report in regard to the way in which complaints were handled following the death of the family's son. [24669/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy is aware, the report published by Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission (GSOC) following the conclusion of their criminal investigations resulting from complaints lodged by the family in question, and referrals made by then Minister Alan Shatter, advised that they found no evidence of criminal behaviour by Garda members in relation to these incidents.

The Commission, however, have identified a select number of complaints which they believe warrant further investigation from a disciplinary perspective. Therefore, as the matter is still presently under active investigation it remains the position that any comments or interference by me, as Minister, would be wholly inappropriate.

However, I will state that I am satisfied that GSOC have taken ample care and consideration with regards to their investigations, dedicating immense time and resources to ensure that each complaint received is assessed in detail and to the highest investigative standards. Furthermore, GSOC's independence must be respected and the Commission must be allowed to complete their important work, unimpeded. To do otherwise, would be to severely limit the operational capabilities of this essential organisation.

As I have stated previously, when the GSOC have completed all investigations relating to this tragic case the question as to whether there remain issues that require further investigation will be fully considered. It will then fall to be decided what further action, if any, should be taken.

My predecessor and the former Taoiseach have met with the family and gave a commitment, which I have repeated, that when all investigations are completed I will consider what further investigation is warranted. In that context, I believe that a meeting with the O'Farrell family at that stage, to hear from them at first hand their views on the outstanding issues, would be helpful.

Referendum Campaigns

445. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if there have been changes to the indicative timetable for the holding of referendums (details supplied) agreed on 26 September 2017. [24787/18]

458. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to hold a referendum on Article 41.2 of the Constitution; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24387/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I propose to take Questions Nos. 445 and 458 together.

The Government announced on 26 September 2017 that it had agreed an indicative timetable for the holding of a number of referendums on proposals for amendments to the Constitution arising from the work of the Citizens' Assembly and the Convention on the Constitution.

In this context, my Department will be responsible for bringing forward appropriate Constitution Amendment Bills on reducing the voting age to 16 and on extending the franchise at Presidential elections to Irish citizens resident outside the State. These referendums will address two of the recommendations of the Convention on the Constitution. Subject to the passage of the Constitution Amendment Bills by the Houses of the Oireachtas, it is proposed that these referendums will be held on the same day as the local and European elections which will take place in late May 2019.

The indicative timetable also included the holding of a plebiscite in October 2018 on directly elected executive mayors. The issues arising in that regard are currently under consideration.

Garda Operations

446. Deputy Brendan Smith asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when it is planned to establish the Garda insurance fraud unit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24933/18]

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 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. As I have previously informed the House, 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.

Adoption Legislation

447. Deputy Ruth Coppinger asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if adoptive leave will be provided for same-sex couples in view of the fact that circular 18/2013 does not cater for the needs of these couples (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25063/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton):

Section 6 of the Adoptive Leave Act 1995 provides for an entitlement to 24 weeks adoptive leave for an employed adopting mother or a sole male adopter.

Following adoption of the 34th amendment to the Constitution and its subsequent legislative changes, my Department identified a lacuna in the Adoptive Leave Act 1995 that prevents male same-sex married couples from availing of adoptive leave and benefits.

To address this lacuna, my Department has prepared draft legislative proposals that will amend the Adoptive Leave Act and will afford the same entitlements to adoptive leave and benefits to all couples who are married, co-habiting or who are in a civil partnership, irrespective of gender.

My Department is currently reviewing how best to advance these legislative proposals and may include these proposals with those planned on paid parental leave as part of a Family Leave Bill.

The Deputy will appreciate that the circular they have referred to is a matter for the Department of Education and Skills, and once the Adoptive Leave Act is amended as I have outlined, I am sure the Department will make the necessary arrangements to update the circular as a matter of priority.

UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

448. Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the budget allocation he plans putting in place in 2018 and 2019 in order to establish a UNCRPD implementation working group and oversight committee which will ensure the swift implementation and integration of the UNCRPD here. [25433/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy Finian McGrath): Article 33 of the UNCRPD requires State Parties to designate a focal point within government for matters relating to the implementation of the Convention, and establish a framework, including one or more independent mechanisms, to promote, protect and monitor implementation of the CRPD. It also requires the involvement and participation of civil society, in particular, persons with disabilities, in the monitoring process.

The monitoring framework for the Convention will include the involvement of both the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC) and the National Disability Authority (NDA). IHREC, as Ireland's National Human Rights Institution will, with the assistance of the NDA, play a key role in supplying periodic independent reports to the UN.

The Equality Division in the Department of Justice and Equality will be the designated focal point as it has policy responsibility for the equality aspects of disability matters. The Division already provides the Secretariat to the National Disability Strategy Implementation Group (NDSIG) which I Chair and where the UNCRPD will be discussed regularly.

It is not possible to arrive at a precise budgetary figure as a key issue in relation to the implementation of the Convention is the coordination of efforts across a range of Government Departments. Individual actions across different Departments have associated cost implications which are included in the votes of the relevant Departments.

I have always placed a strong emphasis on securing adequate funding with €1.76 Billion allocated by the Department of Health for disability services in 2018 representing an increase of 4.4% on 2017. Furthermore, in December of 2017, I announced the securing of an additional

€10 million funding for respite care.

Crime Data

449. Deputy John Lahart asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of unlicensed taxi drivers apprehended by An Garda Síochána in 2016, 2017 and to date in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25460/18]

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.

Work Permits Eligibility

450. Deputy Mary Lou McDonald asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if his attention has been drawn to the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25710/18]

540. Deputy Róisín Shortall asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if the case of a person (details supplied) who was refused leave to remain here will be re-examined in view of the shortage of guidance counsellors and the fact that careers advisers and vocational guidance specialists were added to the ineligible categories of employment for employment permits list after the person commenced their studies and the fact that their degree qualifies them to work here. [25542/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 450 and 540 together.

I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that the person's application for permission to remain in the State has been considered and that the person concerned has been notified of the decision.

The original application was received from the person concerned on 2 November 2017 and a decision letter issued on 17 January 2018.

On 22 March 2018 a review of the original application was requested as an exceptional measure. A decision letter in response to this exceptional request for a review of the original application was issued on 28 May 2018.

The policy in relation to the eligible and ineligible categories of employment for employment permits is a matter for my colleague, the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation.

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 Training

451. Deputy Clare Daly asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the funding allocated for high-quality training on domestic and sexual violence to An Garda Síochána in 2017 and 2018; the number of gardaí who received such training in these years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24274/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy is aware the Garda Commissioner is responsible for the training of personnel within An Garda Síochána and I, as Minister have no direct role in the matter.

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

Garda Information and Communications Technology

452. Deputy Clare Daly asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if GISC's responsibility for the management of the Garda information technology service desk out of hours and on weekends was rolled back in 2016 with responsibility moving to a company (details supplied); and if so, the reason therefore. [24329/18]

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

In support of this, €342 million, including €217 million in additional funding under the Capital Plan, is being invested in Garda ICT infrastructure between 2016 and 2021 to enable An Garda Síochána to deploy the latest cutting-edge technologies in the fight against crime. This significant investment will additionally facilitate progress on important reforms arising from the Garda Inspectorate's report on Crime Investigation.

Decisions in relation to the allocation and management of Garda equipment and resources, including ICT, are a matter for the Garda Commissioner. As Minister, I have no direct role in the matter.

I am informed by the Garda authorities that in 2016 the Garda ICT Service Desk resumed responsibility from the Garda Information Services Centre (GISC) for out of hours and weekend cover.

I am further informed by the Garda authorities that the service desk is staffed by combination of Garda staff and contract staff and that responsibility for the management of the service desk lies with Garda ICT.

Prison Service Staff

453. Deputy Clare Daly asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the name of the governor of Portlaoise prison; when they were appointed; and the name of the previous governor and the date of their appointment. [24350/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I wish to advise the Deputy that the names of Governors assigned to prisons across the prison estate is published on the

Irish Prison Service website www.irishprisons.ie.

The current operational Governor of Portlaoise Prison John Farrell was assigned with effect from Saturday 02 June 2018.

The previous operational Governor of Portlaoise Prison Daniel Robbins was assigned on 06 October 2014 and retired on 04 May 2018. From 05 May 2018 - 01 June 2018 Ethel Gavin Acting Campus Governor was the operational Governor of Portlaoise Prison.

Prison Service Staff

454. Deputy Clare Daly asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number and location of prison governor positions which are vacant; and when they will be filled. [24351/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I have been advised by the Irish Prison Service that there are currently no Governor positions vacant in any prison across the prison estate.

Legal Costs

455. Deputy Michael McGrath asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if it is permitted for an insurance company to pursue claimants or plaintiffs for their High Court and-or Court of Appeal costs even when the claim is successful; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24359/18]

456. Deputy Michael McGrath asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if his attention has been drawn to situations in which insurance companies are refusing to pay for the certificate for senior counsel for the claimant or plaintiff in circumstances in which a case is settled in favour of the claimant; if there is a regulation or restriction preventing this from occurring; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24360/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 455 and 456 together.

As the Deputy may be aware, the determination of who is to pay costs in any given case is a matter for the presiding judge who is, subject only to the Constitution and the law, independent in the exercise of their judicial functions and the decision to pursue those costs is a matter for the parties to the proceedings.

In relation to payment for a Certificate for Senior Counsel, I note that the Deputy refers specifically to a Certificate for Senior Counsel in cases which are settled between parties and so, in the case of a settlement, the terms of same are agreed between the parties and the agreement to include a Certificate is therefore a matter for the parties involved.

Notwithstanding the above, the Cost of Insurance Working Group, chaired by Minister of State Michael D'Arcy TD, examined the issue of the discretion of the court to exercise in favour of the winning party - the 'costs follow the event' principle, as part of its examination of the cost of Employer and Public Liability Insurance.

The Cost of Insurance Working Group believes that a consistent application of this key principle – recognising that it should remain a matter for the independent judiciary to be the key decision makers in this regard – would probably be one of the most effective ways of tack-

ling fraud and exaggerated claims, as it would give insurers the confidence to challenge more robustly cases which they have doubts about and believes that such an approach should have no bearing or impact on plaintiffs who have a deserving case.

It is also of note that under Part 10 of the Legal Services Regulation Act of 2015 a new and much more transparent and client friendly legal costs regime is being rolled-out which will place strict obligations on legal practitioners in how they determine and communicate their fees. This will also be bolstered under the Act by the coming into operation later this year of the new Office of the Legal Costs Adjudicators that will determine disputed legal costs on foot of a set of Legal Costs Principles set out in Schedule One of that Act and will maintain a publicly accessible Register of its determinations. It is also to be noted that section 169 of the 2015 Act puts the general principle of ‘costs follow the event’ on a statutory footing and will also be commenced later this year.

Garda Equipment

457. Deputy Thomas P. Broughan asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when vehicle number recognition systems will be installed in all Garda patrol cars; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24386/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Deputy will appreciate that the Garda Commissioner is responsible for the provision of equipment and resources to An Garda Síochána and I, as Minister, have no direct role in the matter.

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

Question No. 458 answered with Question No. 445.

Sexual Offences Data

459. Deputy Jan O’Sullivan asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the amount of funding that will be provided for the second sexual abuse and violence in Ireland study; the communications he has had with other Departments from which funding for this study would be divided; the timeline for the completion of the study; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24400/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Cabinet Committee on Social Policy and Public Service Reform agreed to establish a Scoping Group to consider the availability of data and make recommendations on a study to identify the prevalence of sexual abuse and violence in Ireland today and emerging trends. The terms of reference for the group are published on my Department’s website. The Group met for the final time on April 9th and have completed their Report and submitted it to my Department for consideration. A number of technical issues are being considered by my Department prior to the report being considered by Government. Once the report has been examined and subsequently considered by Government it will be possible to be more specific about its recommendations and the issues raised by the Deputy. Significant progress has been made and I expect to bring proposals to Government in relation to this matter shortly.

Garda Equipment

460. Deputy Catherine Murphy asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to roll out the use of body-worn cameras by gardaí as standard in view of the fact that the Metropolitan Police in London have seen a 30% decrease in complaints against officers wearing body cameras; if he or his officials in consultation with An Garda Síochána have evaluated the time and resources that can be saved by using such equipment in the context of being able to prove in a more efficient manner complaints against gardaí and/or incidents; his views on the use of body cameras in the context of personal safety of gardaí while in the line of their duty; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24402/18]

552. Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the estimated full-year cost of providing all front-line gardaí with body cameras. [25700/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 460 and 552 together.

The Deputies will appreciate that the Garda Commissioner is responsible for the provision of equipment for An Garda Síochána including specialist equipment such as body worn cameras. As Minister, I have no direct role in the matter.

I have been informed by the Garda authorities that a working group is currently researching and exploring options for the potential use of body worn cameras in An Garda Síochána. I understand that the working group is examining issues including current legislation, the procurement process, storage of data and solutions in other jurisdictions.

In that regard, I have been informed by the Garda authorities that the relevant project team has conducted research to gain an understanding of the scale of the project, technology and training requirements, as well as potential legal and policy implications. It is understood the work of the project team has not yet concluded.

The full-year cost of providing all front-line Gardaí with body cameras would only be confirmed once a public procurement process was concluded and a contract awarded.

Garda Resources

461. Deputy Clare Daly asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of Garda staff who were co-located with staff provided by a company (details supplied) in 2016 and who functioned as corresponding resources as per the terms of the 2016 contract for the provision of skilled resources by the company. [24407/18]

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

I am informed by the Garda authorities that 14 sworn and unsworn Garda members were co-located with staff provided by the company referred to in 2016.

I am further informed that a number of other contract staff would have worked with staff from the referred to company as part of extended multi-disciplinary groups in delivering services to users, but would not have been co-located when doing so.

Garda Resources

462. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of staff, including Garda in-house and external staff provided by a company (details supplied) allocated to provide live support for the Garda IS infrastructure in 2016. [24408/18]

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

I am informed by the Garda authorities that Garda IS infrastructure consists of a range of technologies, platforms and associated systems. There are both “live” and “test” versions of the Garda IS infrastructure, all of which have to be supported. I am further informed that support for the Garda IS Infrastructure is provided under a number of contracts with different suppliers including the company referred to.

According to the Garda authorities, the total number of staff allocated in 2016 by the company referred to and An Garda Síochána to provide support across the range of Garda IS infrastructure was 86, comprising 23 in-house Garda staff and 63 staff provided by the company referred to.

I am further informed by the Garda authorities that this does not include telecommunications staff who support data network infrastructure, or support of infrastructure supplied by external suppliers other than the company referred to.

Garda Information and Communications Technology

463. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of staff including Garda in-house and external staff provided by a company (details supplied) allocated to work as service desk analysts on the Garda information technology service desk in 2016. [24421/18]

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

However, I am informed by the Garda authorities that the number of staff working on the Garda Service Desk in 2016 was 17, comprising 4 in-house Garda staff and 13 staff provided by the company referred to (9 analysts, 3 supervisors and 1 team lead).

Garda Resources

464. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if the €7,625,089 cost of the contract awarded to a company (details supplied) for the provision of skilled resources to An Garda Síochána in 2016 includes staff travel and subsistence costs. [24422/18]

465. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if the €7,205,435 cost of the contract awarded to a company (details supplied) for the provision of skilled resources to An Garda Síochána in 2015 includes staff travel and subsistence costs. [24423/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 464 and 465 together.

As the Deputy will appreciate, the allocation and management of the Garda ICT budget is the responsibility of the Garda Commissioner, as the Accounting Officer for An Garda Síochána.

I am informed by the Garda authorities that the cost of the contracts awarded to the company in question for provision of skilled resources in a range of roles to An Garda Síochána, namely €7,205,435 in 2015 and €7,625,089 in 2016, is based on a number of days and an associated rate for each. I am further informed by the Garda authorities that no additional amount was paid for travel and subsistence.

Garda Vetting

466. Deputy Patrick O'Donovan asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will address a matter (details supplied) regarding Garda vetting and clearance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24424/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): Vetting for employment purposes is carried out by the Garda National Vetting Bureau in accordance with the provisions of the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012-2016 and other relevant laws. The primary purpose of the arrangements that have been put in place is to support protection for children and vulnerable adults. Neither I nor my Department has any role in the processing of such applications.

The Criminal Justice (Spent Convictions and Certain Disclosures) Act 2016 sets out the arrangements in law whereby certain past convictions may not be disclosed. This Act made a series of amendments to the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012 in respect of the arrangements for the disclosure or otherwise of past convictions in the vetting process.

These provisions are applied by the National Vetting Bureau in the context of processing all vetting applications.

Under the Criminal Justice (Spent Convictions and Certain Disclosures) Act 2016 a person is not obliged to disclose certain convictions which are over seven years old, subject to specified limitations. The provisions in this regard are set out in the 2016 Act.

Closed-Circuit Television Systems Provision

467. Deputy Shane Cassells asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of applications received in 2017 and to date in 2018 for the community CCTV scheme; the number of applications received by county in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24428/18]

468. Deputy Shane Cassells asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of applications which have been granted to date for the community CCTV scheme; the number of granted applications by county in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24429/18]

469. Deputy Shane Cassells asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the amount of

funding allocated to date through the community CCTV scheme; the amount of funding allocated by county in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24430/18]

470. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the types of community groups and organisations availing of and inquiring with regard to the community CCTV scheme; the issues which are hindering community groups and organisations from progressing their application to installation of CCTV in their communities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24431/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 467 to 470, inclusive, together.

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

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

It is important to note that community CCTV is governed by section 38 of the Garda Síochána Act 2005 and the Garda Síochána (CCTV) Order 2006 (SI No 289 of 2006). This legal framework requires that any proposed community CCTV 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, and
- have the authorisation of the Garda Commissioner.

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.

In establishing the grant-aid scheme, the Department sought to make the process as user-friendly as possible while respecting these statutory requirements.

Both the application process and documentation were updated and streamlined as compared to the earlier scheme administered by Pobal on behalf of the Department, to make them more accessible to all groups wishing to avail of the scheme.

Further, the Department consulted broadly, including with the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner, An Garda Síochána, the Office of the Attorney General and the Local Government Management Agency. In that regard, I understand that the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner's Office has again confirmed that it is not querying and does not have any current concerns regarding the legislative underpinning of community CCTV systems.

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

11 applications have been received to date and my Department has been informed that a further 14 applications will be submitted in the near future.

4 applications under the scheme have been approved to date, with approved funding totalling almost €120,000. 3 of these approved applications are in relation to systems in County Wexford and 1 is in relation to a system in County Wicklow. A further 4 applications are under active consideration. The remaining 3 applications submitted to date have been returned to the applicants concerned to enable them to provide the information necessary to qualify for grant-aid.

My Department receives enquiries regarding the scheme from a broad spectrum of the public, including in particular local authorities, as well as residents associations, ad hoc community groups as well as private citizens.

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 in relation to the scheme, with a dedicated email address available for that purpose - communitycctv@justice.ie

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

Equality Legislation

471. Deputy Róisín Shortall asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the penalties applying to the refusal of an establishment to allow entry to a customer or to ask a customer to leave on the basis of a mother breast-feeding; and his plans to update legislation in this regard. [24444/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton): Ireland has comprehensive and robust equality legislation in place – namely the Employment Equality Acts 1998-2015 and the Equal Status Acts 2000-2015 – which prohibits discrimination on ten specific grounds, including on gender and family status.

As the Deputy will be aware, the legislation is designed to promote equality and prohibit discrimination and victimisation and it also allows for positive measures to ensure equality across the ten grounds. The Equal Status Acts 2000-2015 outlaw discrimination in the provision of goods and services. Equality legislation also provides for remedies for those who have suffered discrimination.

Mothers who wish to breast feed in public are protected from being discriminated or harassed under the equality legislation. Under section 21 of the Equal Status Acts 2000-2015, a person may seek redress for discrimination by referring the case to the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) or to the Circuit Court. Section 27 of the Equal Status Act sets out the types of redress which the WRC or the Circuit Court may decide – and includes an order for compensation up to the maximum amount that can be ordered by the District Court in civil cases (€15,000).

In addition, the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission is responsible for reviewing the effectiveness of human rights and equality law. IHREC can advise people and refer perceived cases of discrimination to the WRC for investigation and adjudication.

Domestic Violence Services Funding

472. Deputy Bríd Smith asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the funding which will be provided in 2018 and 2019 to implement the provisions of the Domestic Violence Act 2018 (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24477/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Domestic Violence Act 2018 is a landmark piece of legislation which significantly enhances the legal protections available to victims of this appalling form of violence. It is hoped to have this legislation commenced in its entirety by quarter four 2018.

Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, has statutory responsibility for the provision of care and protection to victims of domestic, sexual and gender based violence. Regarding the provision of funding, I am advised by the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs that in 2018, Tusla is allocating €23.8 million in funding for Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence (DSGBV) services. This is an increase of 17% or €3.4 million over the amount allocated in 2015. Tusla are considering any requirements under the Domestic Violence Act 2018 in commissioning of services into the future. The Courts Service and An Garda Síochána advise that preparatory work is underway to ensure that applicable provisions are implemented and the resource implications are being assessed for 2018.

The funding requirements for the Courts Service, An Garda Síochána and Tusla for 2019 will be considered as part of the annual Estimates process.

Garda Oversight

473. Deputy John McGuinness asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the cost of funding the Garda Complaints Board in the past five years to date; the number of personnel involved; the cost to date of the Garda Ombudsman Commission; the number of personnel involved; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24513/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Garda Síochána Complaints Board and the related Garda Síochána Complaints Appeal Board were established under the Garda Síochána (Complaints) Act 1986 to investigate complaints concerning the conduct of members of the Garda Síochána. It retained full responsibility for this function until Part 3 of the Garda Síochána Act 2005 was enacted and the Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission (GSOC) was established in December 2005. It was not until GSOC became fully operational in 2007 that the responsibility for receiving complaints transferred in its entirety to the Commission.

Therefore, it was necessary to maintain the existence of Garda Síochána Complaints Board and the related Appeal Board to enable these bodies to conclude cases which they were already investigating. Complaints which the Board had received but not commenced investigating were transferred to GSOC in accordance with transitional provisions of the Garda Síochána Act 2005.

In May 2012 the Government re-appointed the members of the Garda Síochána Complaints Board as, at that time, there were still three remaining cases to be finalised. The last case was struck out in December 2013.

The term of office of the members serving on the Garda Síochána Complaints Appeal Board expired on 16 December 2013 and from that date the Complaints Board operated with two staff. The two serving members of the Board were later assigned to GSOC.

Questions - Written Answers

Statutory Instrument No. 271 of 2015 provided for the repeal of the Garda Síochána (Complaints) Act 1986 (as amended) with effect from 30 June 2015; this resulted in the dissolution of the Garda Complaints Board and the Garda Síochána Appeal Board.

Expenditure for the Complaints Board amounted to €179,563 in 2013. In 2014 it was €175,740. There was no expenditure in 2015. In 2016 there was a payment of €195.40, which related to the Statutory Instrument No. 271 of 2015. No expenditure has arisen since 2016.

GSOC is funded by a grant provided annually to the Commission through the Vote of the Department of Justice and Equality. The table below illustrates the total cost of GSOC from 2006 up to 2017 and for the current year up to 31 May 2018. The table also illustrates the number of staff employed by the Commission at the end of each year since its establishment. Two points of note are that the stated cost is the yearly spend as per GSOC's published Annual Reports, and the staffing totals do not include the three Commissioners.

Year	Cost	Staff Headcount	Staff FTE
2006	€1,076,905.18	5	5
2007	€14,099,909.19	75	75
2008	€9,940,012.31	92	92
2009	€9,420,100.00	88	88
2010	€9,233,863.45	88	88
2011	€8,509,040.81	84	83
2012	€8,302,853.51	79	79
2013	€7,970,675.00	78	77.6
2014	€8,306,692.74	75	74.6
2015	€8,648,151.57	77	76.8
2016	€8,386,329.00	81	80.4
2017	€8,768,491.38	84	83.53
31/05/2018	€3,602,758.20	85	84.53

Anti-Social Behaviour

474. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Question No. 71 of 23 May 2018, the approximate number of anti-social behaviour orders issued by An Garda Síochána in each region; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24539/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The following table provides a breakdown of the number of behaviour warnings, by year and by region, for the period requested.

It is, however, worth noting that any counts which were less than ten are displayed as an asterisk (*) in the tables. This is due to data protection around provision of low count data. Incident counts for Behaviour Orders (Children), Civil Orders (Adult)(LS) and Good Behaviour Contract (LS) are not shown as each incident type has a national count of less than ten per year in the period examined.

Behaviour Warnings (Adult) (I.S)

Region/ Division	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Dublin Region	214	327	646	333	479	410	694	587	302	728	35
D.M.R. Eastern	12	17	18	14	20	*	*	*	11	*	*
D.M.R. North Central	37	18	103	115	319	137	226	524	242	701	33
D.M.R. Northern	*	81	40	26	14	*	13	14	*	12	*
D.M.R. South Central	18	64	144	13	*	192	412	19	*	*	*
D.M.R. Southern	46	39	39	11	19	16	*	*	10	*	*
D.M.R. Western	99	108	302	154	103	54	30	21	27	*	*
Eastern Region	20	46	29	35	23	20	19	18	18	50	*
Kildare Div	10	*	10	*	*	*	*	*	*	28	*
Laois/Offaly	*	17	*	10	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Meath Division	*	12	10	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Westmeath Div	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	10	*
Wicklow Div	*	12	*	14	16	*	12	*	*	*	*
Northern Region	35	41	62	45	39	41	35	24	26	25	*
Cavan/Monaghan	*	25	48	28	23	26	19	11	13	*	*
Donegal	12	*	*	12	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Louth Division	12	13	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Sligo/Leitrim	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	10	*
Southern Region	111	64	140	127	104	139	121	105	116	80	46
Cork City	60	13	52	33	30	17	19	31	25	*	*
Cork North	12	*	24	25	*	12	13	*	12	13	*
Cork West	*	15	*	*	10	*	*	*	*	*	*
Kerry	15	*	10	*	*	*	11	12	11	13	*
Limerick	23	23	47	56	46	99	69	51	66	46	41
South Eastern Region	21	46	95	89	56	44	56	16	*	25	*
Kilkenny/Carlow	*	12	24	42	34	30	30	*	*	15	*
Tipperary	15	17	48	17	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Waterford Division	*	*	*	*	*	*	12	*	*	*	*
Wexford Division	*	15	19	29	11	*	*	*	*	*	*
Western Region	27	46	134	104	79	54	60	52	38	29	*
Clare	*	*	*	*	*	21	19	13	10	*	*
Galway Division	16	34	67	57	54	18	23	20	12	15	*
Mayo	*	*	48	33	18	13	18	*	16	*	*

Questions - Written Answers

Region/ Division	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Roscommon/ Longford Division	*	*	11	*	*	*	*	11	*	*	*
National Total	428	570	1,106	733	780	708	985	802	507	937	86

*denotes count was less than ten

Behaviour Warnings (Children)

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

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

*denotes count was less than ten

Garda Data

475. Deputy Anne Rabbitte asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of reports of section 12 of the Children's Act recorded on the PULSE system in 2016 and 2017, by each district in tabular form. [24556/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I have requested a report from the Garda authorities in relation to this matter and I will contact the Deputy directly when the report is to hand.

Garda Data

476. Deputy Anne Rabbitte asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of reports of section 13 of the Mental Health Act recorded on the PULSE system in 2016 and 2017, by each district in tabular form. [24557/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I have requested a report from the Garda authorities in relation to this matter and I will contact the Deputy directly when the report is to hand.

Programme for Government Implementation

477. Deputy Micheál Martin asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the status of the implementation of the Programme for Partnership Government as it applies to his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24579/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Government recently approved its second progress report on the implementation of the Programme for Government. This report highlights the progress made over the past year in delivering commitments under the Programme for Partnership Government plan. The Annual Report will be laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas shortly and published thereafter.

Some of the key commitments progressed by my Department to date include:

- €55 million in funding allocated to the Gardaí to tackle gangland crime with measures introduced including the establishment of the Special Crime Task Force to enhance the response to organised crime, and the establishment of a dedicated Garda Armed Support Unit, operating on a 24/7 basis;

- 900 new Gardaí deployed in 2017 bringing the total to over 13,500;
- €100 million funding to complete new Garda HQs at Kevin Street, Galway and Wexford;
- A new Garda Business Watch scheme was established in 2017;

- Signing into law of the Criminal Justice Act 2017, which provides for more stringent bail conditions;
- Enactment of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2017 to enhance and update laws to combat the sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children;
- New legislation enacted strengthening rights and supports for Victims of Crime and to provide better protection for victims of domestic violence;
- A national awareness raising campaign, “What would you do?” was launched to increase the awareness of domestic and sexual violence, and to activate bystanders with the aim of decreasing and preventing this violence;
- New gender equality measures underway under National Strategy for Women and Girls;
- A new National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017 – 2021 launched;
- A Migrant Integration Strategy 2017 - 2020 launched to provide a framework for Government action.
 - €2 million for 15 projects under a national scheme to promote integration of migrants;
 - A Single Application Procedure for International Protection applicants implemented to streamline the application process and reducing the time spent in State provided accommodation.
 - Over 1,000 refugees accepted by Ireland under the EU Relocation Programme and 41 unaccompanied minors previously resident in a migrant camp relocated to Ireland;
 - New Family Reunification Humanitarian Admission program to relocate 530 families here.

Garda Data

478. Deputy Noel Rock asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of juvenile good behaviour contracts issued in each of the years 2007 to 2017 and to date in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24592/18]

479. Deputy Noel Rock asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of juvenile antisocial behaviour orders issued in each of the years 2007 to 2017 and to date in 2018, under Part 13 of the Criminal Justice Act 2006; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24593/18]

480. Deputy Noel Rock asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of anti-social behaviour orders issued in each of the years 2007 to 2017 and to date in 2018, under Part 11 of the Criminal Justice Act 2006; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24594/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 478 to 480, inclusive, together.

As the Deputy will appreciate, the information sought is a matter for the Garda authorities in the first instance. However, I am informed by the Garda authorities that the attached table provides a breakdown of the number of behaviour warnings, by year and by region, for the period requested. For completeness, the table shows the figures for both children and adults, although they are listed separately.

It is, however, worth noting that any counts which were less than ten are displayed as an asterisk (*) in the tables. This is due to data protection around provision of low count data. Incident counts for Behaviour Orders (Children), Civil Orders (Adult)(LS) and Good Behaviour Contract (LS) are not shown as each incident type has a national count of less than ten per year in the period examined.

Of course, addressing local community concerns in relation to public order and anti-social behaviour is a key focus in An Garda Síochána's National Community Policing Model and a range of strong legislative provisions are available to An Garda Síochána in this regard, including those under:

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

For its part, the Government remains committed to ensuring that An Garda Síochána have all the necessary resources to tackle all forms of criminality in our communities. In this context, the Deputy will be aware that a very substantial budget of €1.65 billion has been allocated to the Garda Vote for 2018 and €98.5 million has been provided for Garda overtime for 2018, which inter alia supports Garda activity to tackle these types of problems.

The Government is also committed to ensuring a strong and visible police presence throughout the country in order to maintain and strengthen community engagement, provide reassurance to citizens and to deter crime. The Government will continue this high level of investment in the Garda workforce to ensure that the vision of an overall workforce of 21,000 by 2021 remains on track.

Behaviour Warnings (Adult) (I.S)

Region/ Division	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Dublin Region	214	327	646	333	479	410	694	587	302	728	35
D.M.R. Eastern	12	17	18	14	20	*	*	*	11	*	*
D.M.R. North Central	37	18	103	115	319	137	226	524	242	701	33
D.M.R. Northern	*	81	40	26	14	*	13	14	*	12	*
D.M.R. South Central	18	64	144	13	*	192	412	19	*	*	*
D.M.R. Southern	46	39	39	11	19	16	*	*	10	*	*
D.M.R. Western	99	108	302	154	103	54	30	21	27	*	*
Eastern Region	20	46	29	35	23	20	19	18	18	50	*
Kildare Div	10	*	10	*	*	*	*	*	*	28	*
Laois /Offaly	*	17	*	10	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Meath Division	*	12	10	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Westmeath Div	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	10	*

Questions - Written Answers

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

*denotes count was less than ten

Behaviour Warnings (Children)

Region/ Division	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Dublin Region	224	216	330	185	141	94	77	65	32	25	*
D.M.R. Eastern	*	*	16	*	14	13	*	*	*	*	*
D.M.R. North Central	38	14	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	19	*
D.M.R. Northern	25	53	61	18	20	*	11	*	*	*	*
D.M.R. South Central	*	*	*	*	*	23	*	*	*	*	*

Region/ Division	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
D.M.R. Southern	37	83	24	*	11	*	11	10	15	*	*
D.M.R. Western	119	55	224	159	92	47	36	45	13	*	*
Eastern Region	21	25	26	23	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Kildare Div	10	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Laois/ Offaly	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Meath Division	*	13	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Wicklow Div	11	*	17	18	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Northern Region	46	44	16	11	11	*	*	*	*	*	*
Cavan/ Mon aghan	*	31	12	10	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Donegal	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Louth Division	27	12	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Sligo/ Leitrim	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Southern Region	191	74	152	146	53	82	52	64	87	32	*
Cork City	101	30	36	34	16	10	*	16	21	*	*
Cork North	15	*	17	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Cork West	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Kerry	29	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Limerick	46	32	90	91	34	68	42	48	65	23	*
South Eastern Region	18	55	24	32	25	12	*	*	13	*	*
Kilkenny/ Carlow	*	*	*	11	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Tipperary	13	16	19	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Waterford Division	*	18	*	*	10	*	*	*	*	*	*
Wexford Division	*	20	*	12	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Western Region	*	*	*	11	*	24	*	*	*	*	*
Clare	*	*	*	*	*	18	*	*	*	*	*
Galway Division	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Mayo	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Roscom- mon/Long- ford Division		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
National Total	505	421	556	408	240	224	148	141	139	71	10

*denotes count was less than ten

481. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Question No. 601 of 17 April 2018, if the nature and extent of sexual violence against those in State care will be included in the scope of the review; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24647/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy is aware, the Cabinet Committee on Social Policy and Public Service Reform agreed to establish a scoping group to consider the availability of data and make recommendations on a study to identify the prevalence of sexual abuse and violence in Ireland today and emerging trends. The terms of reference for the group are published on my Department's website. The group met for the final time on 9 April and have completed their report and submitted it to my Department for consideration. A number of technical issues are being considered by my Department prior to the report being considered by Government. Once the report has been examined and subsequently considered by Government it will be possible to be more specific about its recommendations. Significant progress has been made and I expect to bring proposals to Government in relation to this matter shortly.

Rural Crime

482. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the efforts being made to tackle rural crime in the north west; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that the number of burglaries in counties Sligo and Leitrim area is up 30% while nationally the number of burglaries is up 3.6%; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24661/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I want to assure the Deputy that I am very much aware of the impact of crime on rural communities, including the serious damage done by organised gangs who target rural areas to engage in burglary and other property-related crime. Such incidents cannot be tolerated in our society and this Government will continue to support An Garda Síochána in tackling the gangs, including mobile criminal gangs, who target rural areas, including counties Sligo and Leitrim.

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

I am informed by the Commissioner that the strength of the Sligo/Leitrim Division on 30 April 2018, the latest date for which information is readily available was 302. There are also 17 Garda Reserves and 31 Garda civilian staff attached to the Sligo/Leitrim Division. When appropriate, the work of local Gardaí is supported by a number of Garda national units such as the National Bureau of Criminal Investigation, the Armed Support Units, the Garda National Economic Crime Bureau and the Garda National Drugs and Organised Crime Bureau.

As the Deputy will be aware, very significant resources have been provided to An Garda Síochána, including an overtime allocation of almost €100 million announced in Budget 2018, to support large-scale policing operations including Operation Thor.

The scale of Garda activity against burglary and property-related crime under Operation Thor has led to concentrated Garda activity. As of 17 May 2018, 130,702 targeted checkpoints

and 151,819 crime prevention patrols have been conducted nationwide. To give you an idea of the impact of the operation, I can inform you that this concentrated policing activity has produced in the region of 7,569 arrests and 8,613 charges covering a range of offences which, in addition to burglary, include handling stolen property, possession of firearms and drugs offences.

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. €98.5 million 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.

The Programme for Government underlines the need for close engagement between An Garda Síochána and local communities. This is an essential feature of the strong community policing ethos which has long been central to policing in this jurisdiction. The Deputy will be aware that, as part of the overall strategy to oppose criminality, the Garda authorities pursue a range of partnerships with community stakeholders, including the farming organisations. These include the well established Community Alert Programme, which receives annual funding from my Department, as well as the work of the Metal Theft Forum, the Crimestoppers campaign highlighting the Theft of Livestock, the Theftstop initiative in relation to farm equipment, and the highly successful Garda Text Alert Scheme.

On 2 January 2018 I was pleased to announce that my Department will be providing an additional €50,000 in financial support to Community Text Alert Groups as a further measure in this Government's support to crime prevention. This is in addition to the €100,000 which I announced at the National Ploughing Championships in September 2017. The Rebate Scheme, which also ran in 2016, will allow Text Alert Groups registered with An Garda Síochána to apply for funding to contribute towards their yearly running costs. The Text Alert Rebate Scheme will be administered by Muintir na Tíre and I would like to urge groups wishing to participate in the Scheme to contact Muintir na Tíre for more information. The website is www.muintir.ie.

Other policing initiatives include Theft Stop which was launched by the Gardaí and the Irish Farmers Association. Theft Stop is designed to deter criminals from taking and selling farm equipment by ensuring it is clearly marked with a unique ID (such as an EirCode) and then registered on a nationwide database.

An Garda Síochána's Modernisation and Renewal Programme 2016-2021 places a strong emphasis on developing and supporting the community policing ethos of the organisation and enhancing the current delivery model so that Gardaí spend more time in the community, gaining public confidence and trust and providing a greater sense of security. It will result in the introduction of multi-skilled Community Policing Teams in every District. Community Policing Teams will be made-up of Gardaí from a number of different units who will work with the local community to prevent and detect crime. Undoubtedly, the ongoing recruitment process will support all Garda activities and will enhance the provision of effective Community Policing throughout the country.

The Government is committed to ensuring a strong and visible police presence throughout the country in order to maintain and strengthen community engagement, provide reassurance to citizens and to deter crime. Budget 2018 will support the continuation of this high level of

investment in the Garda workforce and ensure that the vision of an overall workforce of 21,000 by 2021 remains on track.

Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission Investigations

483. Deputy Micheál Martin asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he has examined the GSOC inquiry report on the death of a person (details supplied); the actions he is taking to address the issues raised; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24668/18]

487. Deputy Micheál Martin asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the actions being taken to address the comments made by GSOC in the report it concluded on 29 March 2017 on the complaints made by a person (details supplied) and in particular the reference to improved access to information for victims and their families; the actions taken to address this comment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24730/18]

488. Deputy Micheál Martin asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the improvements that have been made or actions that have been taken to address the comments regarding a joined up system for An Garda Síochána, courts and prison services to talk to each other in view of the comments on a GSOC report in relation to the death of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24731/18]

543. Deputy Declan Breathnach asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to improve the sharing of information between court districts and the PSNI and An Garda Síochána in order that it would be clear that a defendant has revoked the provisions of bail of a previous court hearing and therefore should not be allowed further leniency as in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25593/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 483, 487, 488 and 543 together.

As the Deputies are aware, the GSOC report into complaints surrounding this tragedy was recently furnished to me. A copy was also provided to the family of the young man who died in the road traffic incident and subsequently published by GSOC.

It is important that I remind the Deputies that there is still an on-going GSOC investigation and I do not want to say anything that might be considered to prejudice or interfere with that investigation.

The observations that have been provided in the report into improvements that could be made are currently being considered by my officials. However, I can inform the Deputies that there have been developments already undertaken which should begin to address deficiencies identified in the report. In relation to all Gardaí being aware of the information which is available to victims, this has been clarified in the Criminal Justice (Victims of Crime) Act 2017. It specifies the list of information which all victims must be given by members of An Garda Síochána when they first come in contact with a victim. The Act also specifies a long list of information which a victim may opt to receive during the progress of a case.

There is also an onus on the DPP to provide information where it is requested by a victim of crime, a family member of a victim in a fatal case, or a solicitor acting on behalf of either of the aforementioned. In relation to requesting information from the DPP in respect of a decision not to prosecute, since late 2015 a person can ask the DPP for a summary of reasons for a decision not to prosecute through the Victim Liaison Unit.

If that person is not satisfied with the reasons offered, they can ask the DPP to review the decision. Such requests are limited to requesting information concerning decisions not to prosecute made on or after 16 November 2015 and in fatal cases, where the death occurred on or after 22 October 2008.

On a general note, the Deputies should be aware that it is the role of the prosecuting authority to bring to the attention of the court any convictions, bail or court orders of which the court needs to be aware prior to reaching a decision on the case before the court.

There is in place an information sharing platform between An Garda Síochána and the Courts Service which transmits electronically the outcomes of District Court cases from the Courts Service Criminal Case Tracking system (CCTS) to the Garda Síochána Pulse system. There are plans in place to extend this exchange to other courts in due course.

As regards cross-border information sharing, the Deputies will be aware of the close relationship between An Garda Síochána and the PSNI and the importance that is attached to cooperation and information-sharing, be it on a police-to-police basis or through other formal mechanisms. Clearly that principle of the importance of information-sharing should apply to all situations where it is appropriate and practicable to do so.

As the Deputies will appreciate, the comments made by GSOC encompass a number of matters across many agencies. These matters are being reviewed by officials from my Department and it is my hope that any deficiencies identified by the report will be addressed without delay.

Garda Strength

484. Deputy Jim O'Callaghan asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of personnel in Roscrea Garda station to date; the number of personnel that were stationed there five and ten years ago, respectively; if his attention has been drawn to the downgrading of the facility; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24695/18]

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 relation to Roscrea Garda Station it should be noted that station designations or status is a matter for the office of Deputy Commissioner Policing and Security, in conjunction with District and Divisional Officers, having regard to the policing requirements of the area and the surrounding communities. As Minister I have no role in the matter.

I am informed by the Garda Commissioner that, as of the 30 April 2018, the latest date for which figures are available, the strength of the Tipperary Division was 398 of whom 20 are assigned to Roscrea Garda Station. The strength of Roscrea Garda Station in 2008 and in 2013 was 20 and 19 respectively. There are also 16 Garda Reserves and 41 Garda civilian staff attached to the Division. When appropriate, the work of local Gardaí is supported by a number of Garda national units such as the National Bureau of Criminal Investigation, the Armed Support Units, the Garda National Economic Crime Bureau and the Garda National Drugs and Organised Crime Bureau.

This Government is committed to ensuring a strong and visible police presence throughout

the country in order to maintain and strengthen community engagement, provide reassurance to citizens and to deter crime. To achieve this the Government has put in place a plan for an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 personnel by 2021 comprising 15,000 Garda members, 2,000 Reserve members and 4,000 civilians. We are making real, tangible progress on achieving this goal.

Since the reopening of the Garda College in September 2014, just under 1,800 recruits have attested as members of An Garda Síochána and have been assigned to mainstream duties nationwide of whom 44 members have been assigned to the Tipperary Division. Garda numbers, taking account of retirements, increased to 13,551 at the end of 2017 – a net increase of over 600 since the end of 2016.

I am pleased that funding is in place to maintain this high level of investment in the Garda workforce to ensure that the vision of an overall workforce of 21,000 by 2021 remains on track. This year a further 800 new Garda Recruits will enter the Garda College; some 400 of whom have already done so. In total, 800 Garda trainees are scheduled to attest during the year, some 200 of whom attested in March, with a further 200 attesting this Friday. Further, Garda numbers, taking account of projected retirements, are on track to reach 14,000 by the end of this year.

Taking account of projected retirements, reaching a strength of 15,000 by 2021 will require some 1,600 more Garda members to be recruited on a phased basis over the next two years. This is an ambitious programme of accelerated recruitment. To ensure a continuous pipeline of candidates the Public Appointment Service on behalf of the Commissioner recently launched a new recruitment drive with a closing date of 7 June. Successful candidates from this new competition are expected to enter the Garda College in Q2 2019.

In addition to the investment in more Gardaí, a further 500 civilians will also be recruited to fill critical skills gaps across the organisation and to facilitate the redeployment of Gardaí from administrative and technical duties to front-line operational duties. There are plans to strengthen the Garda Reserve with new Reserves expected to commence training in 2018.

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

Immigration Status

485. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the progress to date in the determination of an application under section 3(6) of the Immigration Act 1999 in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24716/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that, in response to a notification pursuant to the provisions of Section 3 of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended), written representations have been submitted on behalf of the person concerned.

These representations, together with all other information and documentation on file, will be fully considered, under Section 3 (6) of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended) and all other applicable legislation, in advance of a final decision being made.

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.

Refugee Data

486. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of cases referred to the International Protection Office that have been granted residency or have had their cases overturned from previous decisions; the number of cases upheld on appeal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24721/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): On 31 December 2016, the International Protection Act 2015 was commenced, providing for the introduction of a single application procedure for people seeking international protection in the State. The 2015 Act replaces the previous sequential application system with a single application process, for asylum, subsidiary protection and permission to remain in the State, bringing Ireland into line with the processing arrangements applicable in other EU Member States.

With the commencement of the International Protection Act, the International Protection Office (IPO) and the International Protection Appeals Tribunal (IPAT) were established for the processing of applications for international protection at first instance and for adjudicating appeals.

From the establishment of the IPO on 31 December 2016 until 31 May 2018, 1,313 applicants were granted protection status by the IPO. During that same period, some 156 grants were also made in respect of permission to remain by the IPO.

During the same period, the IPAT has issued 941 decisions. Of these 941 decisions, 699 relate to International Protection decisions including decisions issued under the various transition arrangements of the International Protection Act 2015. Of these 699 decisions, 539 were Refused/Affirmed and 160 were granted/set aside.

Questions Nos. 487 and 488 answered with Question No. 483.

Assisted Decision Making

489. Deputy Jim O'Callaghan asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the status of the Assisted Decision Making (Capacity) Act 2015; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24762/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act 2015 provides a modern statutory framework to support decision-making by adults with capacity difficulties. The Act was signed into law on 30 December 2015.

New administrative processes and support measures, including the setting up of the Decision Support Service within the Mental Health Commission (a body under the Department of Health), must be put in place before the substantive provisions of the Act can be commenced. A high-level Steering Group comprised of senior officials from the Department of Justice and Equality, the Department of Health, the Mental Health Commission and the Courts Service,

together with the Director of the Decision Support Service, is overseeing the establishment and commissioning of the Decision Support Service (DSS) and this work is ongoing.

The Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act 2015 (Commencement of Certain Provisions) Order 2016 (SI No. 515 of 2016), brought some provisions of Part 1 (Preliminary and General) and Part 9 (Director of the Decision Support Service) of the Act into operation on 17 October 2016. These provisions were brought into operation in order to progress the setting up of the DSS and to enable the process of recruitment of the Director of the DSS to begin. Ms Áine Flynn was appointed Director of the Decision Support Service on 2 October 2017.

The key preparations are being put in place under the oversight of the Steering Group to allow for further commencement orders for the provisions of the 2015 Act to be made when the DSS is ready to roll out the new decision-making support options. The Director is also working in a very determined way to get the necessary staff resources, processes, IT system, expert panels, codes of practice and regulations in place in order that the Decision Support Service can be up and running as quickly as possible. There are many complex strands to this work, including involvement of multiple organisations.

Every effort is underway to ensure that the Decision Support Service has all necessary capacity to open for business as soon as possible. My Department has received an outline implementation plan from the Director which contains monthly milestones for realisation of the objective of an active DSS. As time goes on, every effort will be made by all sides to achieve tightening of the timeframes where possible and the situation will continue to be monitored closely by the Steering Group.

The 2018 Budget provides for an allocation of €3 million in the Justice and Equality Vote for the establishment of the Decision Support Service.

The commencement of Part 8 of the Act, which provides for a legislative framework for advance healthcare directives, is a matter for the Minister for Health.

Garda Resources

490. Deputy Niall Collins asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will discuss with senior Garda management the urgent need for sufficient Garda resources to be allocated to an area (details supplied); his views on the concern of the local community in respect of the matter; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24790/18]

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

I am informed by the Garda Commissioner that, as of the 30 April 2018, the latest date for which figures are available, the strength of the Dublin Metropolitan Region (DMR) South Division was 533 of whom 184 are assigned to Tallaght Garda Station. There are also 17 Garda Reserves and 36 Garda civilian staff attached to the Division. When appropriate, the work of local Gardai 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.

It is important to appreciate that the increased specialisation in An Garda Síochána means the number of Gardaí assigned to various divisions does not include those assigned to various special bureaus or units and, of course, those Gardaí who are also undertaking critical policing work such as the Garda National Bureau of Criminal Investigation, the armed support units, the Garda National Economic Crime Bureau and the Garda National Drugs and Organised Crime Bureau. More than 120 extra Gardaí were assigned to the specialist units within special crime operations since 2017 alone.

This Government is committed to ensuring a strong and visible police presence throughout the country in order to maintain and strengthen community engagement, provide reassurance to citizens and to deter crime. To achieve this the Government has put in place a plan for an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 personnel by 2021 comprising 15,000 Garda members, 2,000 Reserve members and 4,000 civilians. We are making real, tangible progress on achieving this goal.

Since the reopening of the Garda College in September 2014, just under 1,800 recruits have attested as members of An Garda Síochána and have been assigned to mainstream duties nationwide, 136 of whom have been assigned to the DMR South Division with 51 of these assigned to Tallaght Garda Station. Garda numbers, taking account of retirements, increased to 13,551 at the end of 2017 – a net increase of over 600 since the end of 2016.

I am pleased that funding is in place to maintain this high level of investment in the Garda workforce to ensure that the vision of an overall workforce of 21,000 by 2021 remains on track. This year a further 800 new Garda Recruits will enter the Garda College; some 400 of whom have already done so. In total, 800 Garda trainees are scheduled to attest during the year, some 200 of whom attested in March, with a further 200 attesting this Friday. Further, Garda numbers, taking account of projected retirements, are on track to reach 14,000 by the end of this year.

Taking account of projected retirements, reaching a strength of 15,000 by 2021 will require some 1,600 more Garda members to be recruited on a phased basis over the next two years. This is an ambitious programme of accelerated recruitment. To ensure a continuous pipeline of candidates the Public Appointment Service on behalf of the Commissioner recently launched a new recruitment drive with a closing date of 7 June. Successful candidates from this new competition are expected to enter the Garda College in the second quarter of 2019.

In addition to the investment in more Gardaí, a further 500 civilians will also be recruited to fill critical skills gaps across the organisation and to facilitate the redeployment of Gardaí from administrative and technical duties to front-line operational duties. There are plans to strengthen the Garda Reserve with new Reserves expected to commence training in 2018.

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

Guardian Status

491. Deputy Jim O'Callaghan asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if the position of a central registrar to maintain a record of statutory declarations of guardianship in Ireland can

be created; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24795/18]

547. Deputy Jim O'Callaghan asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if consideration has been given to the establishment of a central register here to maintain a record of statutory declarations of guardianships; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25615/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 491 and 547 together.

There are provisions in place to facilitate non-marital fathers who have an ongoing relationship with their children to become guardians of their children. Section 2(4A) of the Guardianship of Infants Act 1964 (as inserted by section 43(c) of the Children and Family Relationships Act 2015) provides for joint guardianship for a father who is not married to the mother of the child and has cohabited with the mother for not less than 12 consecutive months. This 12 month period must include a period, occurring at any time after the birth of the child, of not less than three months during which both the mother and father have lived with the child. This provision came into operation on 18 January 2016.

In addition, a father who is not married to the child's mother and does not satisfy the cohabitation requirements may become a guardian if the parents jointly make a statutory declaration appointing him as a guardian. It is also open to the father at any stage to make an application to court for guardianship of the child under section 6A of the Guardianship of Infants Act 1964.

During the passage of the Children and Family Relationships Bill through the Oireachtas, my predecessor gave consideration to the establishment of a Central Register for Statutory Declarations of guardianship. While considering that such a centralised repository may have some value, she was concerned that it should not become or be perceived as a necessary step in the acquisition of guardianship. She considered that the existing statutory declaration mechanism to make certain parents guardians was readily accessible, cheap and straightforward, and the introduction of guardianship for fathers who satisfy the cohabitation requirement would widen the cohort of fathers who would have joint guardianship.

The Deputy will appreciate that there are issues concerning security, data protection, data management and the financial implications of creating a new registration system which would need to be addressed before such a centralised register could be established.

Another issue that would require careful consideration is that if a system is created whereby failure to register a statutory declaration could mean that a person would not be a guardian, this could have the entirely unintended consequence of making guardianship more difficult to obtain than it is at present.

The Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection has responsibility for the Civil Registration Acts. The Deputy may be aware that section 17 of the Civil Registration Act 2004 provides for the appointment of registrars in each registration area to carry out functions under that Act such as the registration of births and deaths. The creation of a new post of a Central Registrar to maintain a record of statutory declarations of guardianship would require specific provision in primary legislation. The creation of such a post would seem unnecessary in view of Part 9 of the Children and Family Relationships Act 2015, which provides for a number of amendments to the Civil Registration Act 2004, including providing for the taking and receiving of statutory declarations in relation to guardianship. Section 27A of the Civil Registration Act 2004 (as inserted by section 97 of the Children and Family Relationships Act 2015) provides that a registrar may, during the period of 14 days immediately following the date on which the birth of a child is registered or re-registered, take and receive a statutory declaration of guardianship made under section 2(4)(e) or 6B(4)(c) of the Guardianship of Infants Act 1964

in respect of a child.

No provision of Part 9 of the Children and Family Relationships Act 2015 has yet been commenced. Some sections cannot be commenced until Parts 2 and 3 relating to donor assisted human reproduction (DAHR) are brought into operation by the Minister for Health. For example, statutory declarations cannot be made under section 6B(4)(c) of the Guardianship of Infants Act 1964 in respect of children born as a result of DAHR until the provisions of the 2015 Act relating to DAHR have been commenced by the Minister for Health. The commencement of other sections of Part 9 is dependent on provisions of the Civil Registration (Amendment) Act 2014 being commenced. My Department is liaising with the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection in relation to scheduling the commencement of these sections.

Garda Training

492. Deputy Thomas P. Broughan asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of gardaí in each district in the Dublin region who have completed the CBD level-three driving course in each of the years 2016 and 2017 and to date in 2018; when this course will be next run; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24856/18]

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

Responsibility for training lies with the Garda College and the Divisional Continuing Professional Development Schools under the overall responsibility of the Executive Director for Human Resources and People Development and I am informed by the Garda authorities that following a review of its driver training programmes in 2009, An Garda Síochána introduced a five level suite of competency based driving (CBD) courses with each level specifically catering for the required knowledge base, skill set and operational requirements of members undergoing the relevant training. The review was informed by the Garda Inspectorate's report into roads policing. I understand that CBD Level 3 is of three weeks duration and specifically designed for Gardaí assigned to the Specialist Units concentrating on the competencies necessary to drive Garda vehicles and carry out all driving emergency response and vehicle stopping relevant to the roles of the Specialist Units. While there is no set date for the next CBD3 training programme, the Commissioner has informed me that this will be facilitated in the third quarter of this year subject to operational demand.

The Deputy will be aware that under this Government's programme of accelerated recruitment, just under 1,800 new recruits have attested as members of An Garda Síochána since the reopening of the Garda College in September 2014. I am informed by the Commissioner that this welcome increase in the strength of the Garda rank together with some 2,000 new vehicles coming on stream in the period 2013 to 2017 has resulted in a continuous demand for driver training courses.

I am advised that Garda management are conducting a review to identify how the delivery

Questions - Written Answers

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

As CBD3 training is specifically geared toward the Specialist Units, for the Deputy's information I have set out in the table the total number of gardaí who successfully completed CBD3 training, in each of the years 2016 and 2017 and up to 30 April 2018, the latest date for which figures are currently available.

Number of Gardaí who successfully completed CBD3 Driver Training in 2016 - 2018

Year		2016	2017	2018*
Total		41	83	45

*Up to 30 April 2018

Proposed Legislation

493. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to update the Criminal Justice (Public Order) Act 2003; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24857/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The main purpose of the Criminal Justice (Public Order) Act 2003 is to provide the Garda Síochána with additional powers to deal with late night street violence and anti-social conduct attributable to excessive drinking. It does this by providing for the closure of premises such as pubs, off licenses, late night clubs and food premises where there is disorder or noise on or close to the premises, as well as the making of exclusion orders on individuals convicted of a range of public order offences, in addition to any penalty they might receive under the Criminal Justice (Public Order) Act 1994.

While the Public Order Acts are kept under continual review, I have no plans at present to update the Criminal Justice (Public Order) Act 2003.

Asylum Applications Data

494. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the age profile of asylum seekers currently resident in direct provision by age and gender in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24863/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton): There are currently 34 accommodation centres located in 17 counties throughout the state.

Based on the most recently available information, the statistics requested by the Deputy (age profile by gender) are outlined below.

Age	Female	Male
0-4	331	369
5-12	309	333
13-17	102	124

Age	Female	Male
18-25	269	438
26-35	678	1,016
36-45	407	625
46-55	116	203
56-65	43	42
66+	20	13
Total	2,275	3,163

Naturalisation Eligibility

495. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if a Palestinian citizen who is married to an Irish citizen is eligible to apply for Irish citizenship. [24866/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The granting of Irish citizenship through naturalisation is governed by the provisions of the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 1956, as amended. All applications for a certificate of naturalisation are processed and assessed individually in accordance with the provisions of the Act. A determination on whether an applicant satisfies the statutory criteria attendant to naturalisation can only be made after an application is received.

Section 15 of the Act provides that the Minister may, in his absolute discretion, grant an application for a certificate of naturalisation if satisfied that certain statutory conditions are fulfilled. The conditions are that the applicant must:

- be of full age, or a minor born in the State,
 - be of good character,
 - have had a period of one year's continuous residency in the State immediately before the date of application and, during the eight years immediately preceding that period, have had a further total residence in the State amounting to four years,
 - intend in good faith to continue to reside in the State after naturalisation,
 - have, before a judge of the District Court in open court, in a citizenship ceremony or in such manner as the Minister, for special reasons, allows -
- (i) made a declaration, in the prescribed manner, of fidelity to the nation and loyalty to the State, and (ii) undertaken to faithfully observe the laws of the State and to respect its democratic values.

Section 15A provides that, notwithstanding the above, where the application is based on being the spouse or civil partner of an Irish citizen the requirements are, inter alia, that the couple are married or civil partners to each other for a period of at least 3 years and are living together and, immediately before the date of application, have a period of one year's continuous residence in the island of Ireland and, during the preceding four years, have a further period amounting to 2 years (i.e. 3 years in total). Section 15A(2) provides that the Minister may, in his absolute discretion waive some of the conditions in relation to an application from a spouse or civil partner of an Irish citizen if he is satisfied that the applicant would suffer serious consequences in respect of his or her bodily integrity or liberty if not granted Irish citizenship.

It is open to any individual to lodge an application for citizenship if and when they are in a

position to meet the statutory conditions as prescribed in the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 1956, as amended. The granting of Irish citizenship may have implications regarding any citizenship already held by applicants therefore appropriate research is advised with the authorities in the applicant's originating jurisdiction.

Detailed information on Irish citizenship and naturalisation, along with the relevant application forms and guidance notes, is available on the INIS website at www.inis.gov.ie.

Commencement of Legislation

496. Deputy Róisín Shortall asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the position regarding the sections of the Children and Family Relationships Act 2015 which have not yet been commenced further to concerns raised by an organisation (details supplied) on behalf of same-sex couples; the reason for the delay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24902/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Children and Family Relationships Act 2015 was enacted on 6 April 2015 but has not yet been fully commenced. The Children and Family Relationships Act 2015 (Commencement of Certain Provisions Order) 2016 (S.I. No. 12 of 2016) commenced the bulk of the Act with effect from 18 January 2016. That Commencement Order brought provisions of Parts 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 12 and 13 of the Act into operation. The Children and Family Relationships Act 2015 (Commencement) Order 2017 (S.I. No. 355 of 2017) commenced part of section 47(c) of the Act with effect from 31 July 2017 and the Children and Family Relationships Act 2015 (Commencement) (No. 2) Order 2017 (S.I. No. 474 of 2017) commenced provisions of the Act relating to adoption by civil partners and cohabiting couples with effect from 2 November 2017.

Part 10 of the Act, which amended the Passports Act 2008, was commenced by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade on 1 July 2015.

Part 11 of the Act, which related to adoption, was not commenced and was repealed by section 2(2) of the Adoption (Amendment) Act 2017, which came into operation on 19 October 2017, as provided for by the Adoption (Amendment) Act 2017 (Commencement) Order 2017 (S.I. No. 443 of 2017). The provisions in Part 11 have been incorporated into the Adoption (Amendment) Act 2017, for which the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs is responsible.

Section 177 of the Act which amends section 2 of the Adoptive Leave Act 1995 has not yet been commenced. Following adoption of the 34th amendment to the Constitution and its subsequent legislative changes, my Department identified a lacuna in the Adoptive Leave Act 1995 that prevents male same-sex married couples from availing of adoptive leave and benefits. To address this lacuna, my Department has prepared draft legislative proposals that will amend section 177 to will afford the same entitlements to adoptive leave and benefits to all couples who are married, cohabiting or who are in a civil partnership, irrespective of gender.

Parts 2 and 3 of the Children and Family Relationships Act 2015 provide for parentage through donor-assisted human reproduction (DAHR). The issue of the recognition of parentage for same-sex couples and their children is dealt with under Part 2 of the Act. The Minister for Health has responsibility for commencement of Parts 2 and 3 of the Act.

Other provisions of the Act which relate to DAHR have not yet been commenced as they are linked to Parts 2 and 3. The commencement of the provisions of the Act which are related to Parts 2 and 3 will be co-ordinated with the commencement of those Parts by the Minister for Health.

In this regard, the Deputy will be aware that the General Scheme of the Assisted Human Reproduction Bill is undergoing pre-legislative scrutiny by the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Health. That Bill will provide for the establishment of an Assisted Human Reproduction Regulatory Authority which will, among other things, undertake certain functions under Parts 2 and 3 of the Children and Family Relationships Act 2015.

Part 9 of the Act provides for a number of amendments to the Civil Registration Act 2004. No provision of Part 9 has yet been commenced. Some sections cannot be commenced until Parts 2 and 3 are brought into operation by the Minister for Health. Other sections are dependent on provisions of the Civil Registration (Amendment) Act 2014 being commenced and my Department is liaising with the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection in relation to scheduling the commencement of these sections.

Garda Deployment

497. Deputy Maurice Quinlivan asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of gardaí in the Henry Street and Roxboro Road districts of Limerick city in each of the years 2007 to 2017 and to date in 2018, in tabular form. [24914/18]

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

As the Deputy will be aware both Henry Street and Roxboro Road Garda Districts form part of the Limerick Division. I am informed by the Commissioner that on 30 April 2018, the latest date for which figures are readily available, the strength of the Limerick Division was 565, of whom 309 and 136 were assigned to Henry Street and Roxboro Road Garda Districts respectively. There are also 27 Garda Reserves and 53 civilians attached to the Division. When appropriate, the work of local Gardaí is supported by a number of Garda national units such as the National Bureau of Criminal Investigation, the Armed Support Units, the Garda National Economic Crime Bureau and the Garda National Drugs and Organised Crime Bureau.

This Government is committed to ensuring a strong and visible police presence throughout the country in order to maintain and strengthen community engagement, provide reassurance to citizens and to deter crime. To achieve this the Government has put in place a plan for an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 personnel by 2021 comprising 15,000 Garda members, 2,000 Reserve members and 4,000 civilians. We are making real, tangible progress on achieving this goal.

Since the reopening of the Garda College in September 2014, just under 1,800 recruits have attested as members of An Garda Síochána and have been assigned to mainstream duties nationwide, of whom 53 members have been assigned to the Limerick Division. Garda numbers, taking account of retirements, increased to 13,551 at the end of 2017 – a net increase of over 600 since the end of 2016.

I am pleased that funding is in place to maintain this high level of investment in the Garda workforce to ensure that the vision of an overall workforce of 21,000 by 2021 remains on track. This year a further 800 new Garda Recruits will enter the Garda College; some 400 of whom have already done so. In total, 800 Garda trainees are scheduled to attest during the year, some

Questions - Written Answers

200 of whom attested in March, with a further 200 attesting this Friday. Further, Garda numbers, taking account of projected retirements, are on track to reach 14,000 by the end of this year.

Taking account of projected retirements, reaching a strength of 15,000 by 2021 will require some 1,600 more Garda members to be recruited on a phased basis over the next two years. This is an ambitious programme of accelerated recruitment. To ensure a continuous pipeline of candidates the Public Appointment Service on behalf of the Commissioner recently launched a new recruitment drive with a closing date of 7 June. Successful candidates from this new competition are expected to enter the Garda College in Q2 2019.

In addition to the investment in more Gardaí, a further 500 civilians will also be recruited to fill critical skills gaps across the organisation and to facilitate the redeployment of Gardaí from administrative and technical duties to front-line operational duties. There are plans to strengthen the Garda Reserve with new Reserves expected to commence training in 2018.

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

For the Deputy's information I have set out below in tabular form the number of Gardaí allocated to the Henry Street and Roxboro Road Garda Districts in each of the years 2007 to 2017 and to date in 2018, as of 30 April 2018 the latest date for which figures are currently available, as supplied by the Commissioner.

Strength of Henry Street and Roxboro Garda Districts 2007-2018*

Dis-trict	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018*
Henry Street	330	358	363	376	363	341	329	314	311	317	313	309
Rox-boro Road	134	139	141	140	148	137	134	129	124	125	129	136

*Up to 30 April 2018

Closed-Circuit Television Systems

498. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the reason the Policing Authority has not yet issued guidelines on CCTV schemes in accordance with section 31(d) of the Garda Síochána (Policing Authority and Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2015; when the Policing Authority will issue these guidelines; if he issued guidelines prior to the 2015 Act as per section 38(11)(a) of the Garda Síochána Act 2005; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24932/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Deputy will be aware that CCTV systems installed for the purposes of crime prevention and as aids to policing in areas to which the general public routinely have access, such as town centres, fall into two distinct but complementary categories, namely Garda CCTV systems and community-based CCTV systems. Neither type of CCTV system may be established without authorisation by the Garda

Commissioner under section 38 of the Garda Síochána Act 2005, among other requirements.

Garda CCTV systems are planned and implemented on the basis of An Garda Síochána's identified operational needs and priorities. Accordingly, decisions in relation to the introduction or extension of such systems are a matter for the Garda Commissioner and I, as Minister, have no role in that regard.

Under the grant-aid scheme launched by my Department last year to assist groups in the establishment of community-based CCTV systems in their local areas, eligible 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.

I am very anxious to ensure that all interested groups, in both rural and urban areas, take advantage of the availability of this grant aid scheme. Full details of the grant aid package including guidelines, application forms, code of practice and other relevant documentation are all available to download from my Department's website - www.justice.ie. Support and guidance is available to help interested groups to apply for this funding through a dedicated email address available for this purpose - communitycctv@justice.ie. In addition, the criteria for the installation and operation by authorised persons of the CCTV system in specified areas has been established.

As the Deputy is aware, the Policing Authority, under section 38(11) of the An Garda Síochána Act 2005, as amended, is required to issue guidelines to the Garda Commissioner concerning the supervision and control by the Commissioner of the monitoring of CCTV by authorised persons. I can confirm to the Deputy that while the Authority has not issued guidelines under section 38(11) as yet, my Department is engaging with the Authority on the issue.

As mentioned above my Department has issued a Code of Practice For Community based CCTV systems which is available from our website at www.justice.ie. This provides guidance to local authority groups and informs them of their legal and data protection obligations.

Data Protection

499. Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Question No. 115 of 30 May 2018, the process involved in drawing up the codes of conduct referred to in section 32 of the Data Protection Act 2018; the way in which all relevant stakeholders, including bodies that represent the interests of children, can make an appropriate input into its development and implementation; if a consultation will be opened on same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24934/18]

500. Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to Question No. 115 of 30 May 2018, if he will meet an organisation (details supplied) in regard to drawing up the codes of conduct referred to in section 32 of the Data Protection Act 2018 in order that it can make an appropriate input into its development and implementation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24935/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 499 and 500 together.

The position is that section 32 of the Data Protection Act 2018 provides that the Data Protection Commission (DPC) shall encourage the drawing up of codes of conduct intended to contribute to the proper application of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) with regard to the protection of children, the information to be provided by a controller to children,

the manner in which the consent of the holders of parental responsibility over a child is to be obtained for the purposes of Article 8 of the GDPR, integrating the necessary safeguards into the processing in order to protect the rights of children in an age-appropriate manner for the purposes of Article 25 of the GDPR and the processing of the personal data of children for the purposes of direct marketing and creating personality and user profiles.

In addition, section 32 provides that for the purpose of establishing whether a draft code provides sufficient appropriate safeguards, the DPC may consult with children and bodies who appear to the DPC to represent the interests of children, the holders of parental responsibility over children and the Ombudsman for Children.

The DPC - which acts with complete independence in the performance of its tasks and exercise of its powers - has advised that it has recently engaged with a number of stakeholders in the child protection and children's rights areas and intends to carry out a public consultation around issues pertaining to the specific standards of data protection applicable to children and the rights of children as data subjects.

The DPC intends to involve children directly in this consultation. It will also invite responses from all stakeholders in this area, including amongst others, organisations which represent children's rights, child protection organisations, representative bodies for parents and educators, as well as organisations that collect and process children's data. This work will commence when the new school year starts in September 2018.

Arising from the consultation, the DPC will work with the industry, government and voluntary sector respondents and their representative bodies in a process to encourage the drawing up of a code of conduct to which entities which collect and process children's data would demonstrably adhere.

It will be open to all interested parties to respond to the DPC public consultation process. As Minister for Justice and Equality, I do not have a role in relation to the drawing up or implementation of codes of conduct under section 32 of the Data Protection Act 2018.

Leave to Remain

501. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if the INIS has access to an ink stamp to appropriately endorse a passport allowing a person to remain in the State (details supplied) on a stamp 1 basis and seek employment without the requirement for an employment permit; if not, if it will be supplied with same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24937/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that officials have been in contact with the Deputy directly to request further details to allow further investigation of this matter.

Home Repossessions Rate

502. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of proceedings lodged in respect of repossession cases before the courts involving the family home; the number of proceedings dealt with; the number of adjournments granted in each of the years 2015 to 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24980/18]

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, further to PQ 23433/18 on 29 May 2018, provided information on the number of Circuit Court proceedings in respect of properties identified as the primary home lodged in 2015-2017 as well as the number of proceedings dealt with in 2015-2017.

Possession Proceedings in the Circuit Court in respect of properties identified as the Primary Home in 2015 - 2017

	2015	2016	2017
Civil Bills Lodged	4,088	3,277	2,439
Orders Granted	918	854	733

The Courts Service has advised that court statistics in relation to adjournments granted in Circuit Court possession proceedings do not distinguish between properties identified as the primary home and other properties. Information on adjournments broken down by property type would require the examination of individual court records which would require a disproportionate amount of staff time and resources. However, in order to be of assistance to the Deputy, the Courts Service has provided statistics on the number of adjournments granted by the Circuit Court in relation to all possession proceedings in 2015-2017.

Adjournments granted by Circuit Court in relation to Possession Proceedings

Possession Civil Bill Cases	2015	2016	2017
Adjournments Granted	24,052	21,855	22,147

Please note that these statistics include all adjournments in a case in each of the years.

Courts Service Data

503. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of fines that have been applied to persons driving without insurance in each of the years 2013 to 2017, by county in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25019/18]

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, and this includes 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 provided the following Report on the number of fines imposed for driving without insurance from 2013 to 2017, by Court Area (please note Report is by offence):

Court Area	Jan-Dec 2013	Jan-Dec 2014	Jan-Dec 2015	Jan-Dec 2016	Jan-Dec 2017
ABBEYFEALE	13	5			
ACAILL	2	1	2	4	1

Questions - Written Answers

Court Area	Jan-Dec 2013	Jan-Dec 2014	Jan-Dec 2015	Jan-Dec 2016	Jan-Dec 2017
AN CLOCHAN LIATH	12	14	18	14	23
AN DAINGEAN		1		4	6
AN FAL CARRACH	9	12	10	12	12
AN SPIDEAL	2				
ARDEE	19	15	21	17	30
ARKLOW	32	35	20	25	41
ATHLONE	80	118	103	112	156
ATHY	25	31	34	37	40
BALLAGHADERREEN	17	20	17	16	21
BALLINA	22	26	39	33	39
BALLINASLOE	51	50	66	33	52
BALLYCONNELL & SWANLIN-BAR	5				
BALLYHAUNIS	10	2			
BALLYSHANNON	13	30	19	17	19
BALTINGLASS	12				
BANDON	36	53	62	55	60
BANTRY	15	19	18	28	33
BEAL AN MHUIRTHEAD	9	8	4	4	8
BIRR	19				
BRAY	78	118	73	108	125
BUNCRANA	24	17	41	30	23
CAHIRCIVEEN			7	1	4
CARLOW	87	95	136	119	108
CARNDONAGH	21	20	16	25	32
CARRICK ON SHANNON	28	27	28	27	28
CARRICK ON SUIR	18	22	17	12	14
CARRICKMACROSS	27	43	44	83	91
CASHEL	34	41	34	31	56
CASTLEBAR	53	40	50	65	92
CASTLECOMER	1				
CASTLEREA	10	10	11	14	18
CAVAN	54	65	96	120	125
CILL RONAIN	1		4	3	1
CLIFDEN	11	18	16	17	15
CLONAKILTY	34	19	25	23	24
CLONES	5				
CLONMEL	57	48	41	40	50
CORK CITY	539	425	398	500	481
DOIRE AN FHEICH	13	18	15	18	25
DONEGAL	9	13	23	24	17
DROGHEDA	70	61	45	57	173

Court Area	Jan-Dec 2013	Jan-Dec 2014	Jan-Dec 2015	Jan-Dec 2016	Jan-Dec 2017
DUBLIN METROPOLITAN DISTRICT	1,556	1,899	2,015	2,171	2,671
DUNDALK	101	66	61	72	139
DUNGARVAN	8	18	17	18	30
EDENDERRY	24				
ENNIS	181	211	177	188	195
FERMOY	27	53	33	44	73
GALWAY	168	151	180	203	240
GOREY	84	82	90	79	133
GORT	25	21	42	27	51
KELLS	39	3			
KENMARE	1	4	6	3	5
KILCOCK	35	41	40	57	60
KILKENNY	105	86	122	131	158
KILLALOE	20	29	42	34	26
KILLARNEY	6	18	19	30	36
KILLORGLIN	1	6	2	2	5
KILMALLOCK	1				
KILRUSH	28	33	29	30	31
KINSALE	10	1			
LETTERKENNY	93	98	108	121	142
LIMERICK	230	165	334	449	495
LISMORE	4	2	6	4	13
LISTOWEL	18	19	21	9	17
LONGFORD	76	137	126	165	168
LOUGHREA	38	59	40	56	58
MACROOM	27	17	36	28	57
MALLOW	31	55	78	71	103
MANORHAMILTON	5	4	5		3
MEATH				71	351
MIDLETON	42	59	58	67	81
MONAGHAN	16	40	40	56	71
MULLINGAR	71	63	96	147	184
NA GLEANNTA	10	16	7	6	7
NAAS	120	169	169	193	235
NAVAN	61	90	80	39	3
NENAGH	41	46	87	73	95
NEWCASTLE WEST	75	73	105	94	135
PORTLAOISE	97	116	120	145	201
ROSCOMMON	38	41	49	41	35
SHANNON	1				
SKIBBEREEN	19	20	19	6	15
SLIGO	41	57	57	66	92

Questions - Written Answers

Court Area	Jan-Dec 2013	Jan-Dec 2014	Jan-Dec 2015	Jan-Dec 2016	Jan-Dec 2017
STROKESTOWN	4	9	15	11	7
SWINFORD	3				
TEMPEMORE	3				
THURLES	36	31	56	49	57
TIPPERARY	28	26	33	20	33
TRALEE	24	43	44	55	74
TRIM	24	20	32	9	
TUAM	61	76	80	77	76
TUBBERCURRY	11	8	14	17	18
TULLAMORE	78	144	133	158	243
VIRGINIA	81	94	72	86	64
WATERFORD CITY	152	126	107	118	108
WESTPORT	10	9	12	11	6
WEXFORD	76	72	80	81	218
WICKLOW	56	42	54	61	57
YOUGHAL	10	14	13	21	10
Total	5,808	6,322	6,814	7,498	9,428

Motor Insurance Data

504. Deputy Robert Troy asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of vehicles seized for driving without insurance in each of the years 2013 to 2017, by county in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25021/18]

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.

Road Traffic Accidents Data

505. Deputy Robert Troy asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of deaths arising out of accidents involving vehicles which were driven by uninsured drivers in each of the years 2013 to 2017 and to date in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25022/18]

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.

Asylum Applications Data

506. Deputy Clare Daly asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Question No. 279 of 29 May 2018, if only 0.5% of residents on direct provision have been in the asylum process for more than three years (details supplied). [25055/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): In relation to the response to Parliamentary Question No. 279 of 29 May 2018, it is important to note that the figures provided in that response relate only to those that have applied for international protection that have not yet received a first instance decision.

The report of the Reception and Integration Agency (RIA) from December 2017, that is cited by the Deputy for comparison, relates to all persons residing in Direct Provision, regardless of whether they have had a first instance decision or not. Moreover, it is important to note that not all of those who apply for international protection choose to reside in Direct Provision accommodation and that there are also people residing in Direct Provision that are no longer in the protection process (such as those that have received international protection status or have Deportation Orders issued against them and are obliged to remove themselves from the State).

In response to the Deputy's question regarding those in the international protection process and residing in Direct Provision (regardless of whether they have got a first instance decision or at a later stage of the process), the percentage of such applicants resident for more than three years amounts to 8.3%.

Garda Resources

507. Deputy John Brassil asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if Iveragh, County Kerry, will be supported with the installation of ANPR cameras to assist in policing (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25061/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will appreciate, the Garda Commissioner is responsible for the carrying on and managing and controlling generally the administration and business of An Garda Síochána, including the distribution and allocation of Garda resources. As Minister, I have no direct role in the matter.

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

Garda Recruitment

508. Deputy Patrick O'Donovan asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when a new superintendent will be appointed to Bruff Garda station, County Limerick. [25066/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will appreciate, the distribution of personnel is a matter for the Garda Commissioner and I, as Minister have no direct role in the matter. I am assured by the Commissioner that Garda personnel assigned throughout the country, together with overall policing arrangements and operational strategies, are continually monitored and reviewed. Such monitoring ensures that optimum use is made of Garda Resources and the best possible Garda service is provided to the general public.

I am informed by the Commissioner that Bruff Garda District forms part of the Limerick Division and that a Superintendent will be assigned to the District on 14 June 2018.

Immigration Status

509. **Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if consideration has been given to allow a person (details supplied) to remain legally here; if recognition has been given to the person's exceptional academic achievement in the areas of science, technology, engineering and mathematics; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25069/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am informed by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that this case relates to a person who brought a Judicial Review to the High Court. As the case is still *sub judice* I do not propose to comment further at this time.

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 INIS is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

Departmental Correspondence

510. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when a reply will issue to correspondence (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25074/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I wish to confirm receipt of the correspondence sent by the Deputy on 3 May 2018.

The Deputy will appreciate that it was necessary for the Department to enquire into the matter. However I understand that a response is in preparation and will issue to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Immigration Status

511. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when he expects a decision on an immigration appeal by persons (details supplied) to be processed; if it will be expedited in view of the seriousness of the situation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25083/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that an appeal in respect of both applications was received on the 16 May 2018. The applications were made under the terms of 2004/38/EC Directive (Free Movement) on the rights of citizens of the Union and their family members to move and reside freely within the territory of Member States. An appeals officer will examine the applications and give full consideration to all the information made available in the original application and in the appeal.

Appeals are generally processed in chronological order (i.e. based on date order of receipt) and while every effort is made to process them as soon as possible, processing times will vary having regard to the volume, their complexity, the possible need to investigate, enquire into, or seek further information in relation to certain applications, and the resources available. Unfortunately, I cannot therefore give a definitive date at this time as to when these appeals will be

finalised.

The applicants will be notified in writing as soon as a decision has been reached.

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 INIS is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

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

Prison Service Data

512. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the lengths of time individual prisoners were placed in safety observation cells, closed observation cells and 22 and 23 hour lock up in 2017 and to date in 2018, by prison in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25085/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by my officials in the Irish Prison Service that the data in relation to the duration of time individual prisoners were placed in Safety Observation Cells, Close Supervision Cells, 22 hour lock up and 23 hour lock up is not collated in the format requested. To collate this data would require a manual examination of a large number of individual prisoner records. Such an examination would require a disproportionate and inordinate amount of staff time and effort, which could not be justified where there are other significant demands on resources.

I can advise the Deputy that special arrangements are in place for prisoners who have been identified as being at risk, whereby they are placed in either a Safety Observation Cell or Close Supervision Cell on special observation and checked every 15 minutes. Prisoners who may have received bad news (for example a bereavement) are also closely monitored. There is a clear distinction between Safety Observation Cells which are used only for medical health reasons and Close Supervision Cells which are used for managing violent, disruptive or distressed prisoners.

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.

Under Rule 62 of the Prison Rules 2007 a 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. In addition a smaller number of prisoners may have their regimes restricted for medical (Rule 64) or discipline reasons (Rule 67).

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. The collation of a Quarterly Census of Restricted Regime

Prisoners commenced in 2013. This census is published on its website (www.irishprisons.ie) and includes details on a prison by prison basis of the number of prisoners on 22 and 23 hour lock-up each quarter.

Data Protection

513. Deputy Clare Daly asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of female and male prisoner, respectively, who exercised their right to vote in the referendum to repeal the eighth amendment. [25086/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I wish to advise the Deputy that the number of prisoners who exercised their right to vote in the recent Referendum was 58,55 males and 3 females. I am advised by my officials in the Irish Prison Service that considerable efforts were made to facilitate prisoner voting prior to the Referendum date.

The Irish Prison Service complies with the provisions of the Electoral Amendment Act 2006 in the context of facilitating prisoner voting in general and local elections and referenda, through ensuring:

Information on voting is contained in the induction packs presented to all prisoners on committal. Prison officials have worked closely with the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government in producing an information leaflet for prisoners on prisoner voting. This leaflet is widely available in all prisons.

All prisons have a stock of ballot application forms available to prisoners on request.

All prisons have a designated official who has been appointed under the provisions of the Electoral Amendment Act 2006 with responsibility for the facilitation of prisoner postal voting.

Prisoners have access to a range of media forms including newspapers, radio and TV through which they are kept informed of current affairs. The extensive educational facilities available in the various institutions also play a role in this process of increasing prisoner awareness of political developments. Both the library service and the educational services in the prisons play a valuable role in increasing awareness among prisoners of their rights in this area.

Garda Reserve

514. Deputy John Brassil asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if Caherciveen Garda station will be reopened; his plans to appoint the requisite gardaí to facilitate same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25095/18]

532. Deputy Michael Healy-Rae asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if a series of matters (details supplied) regarding public order issues in an area in County Kerry will be examined; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25448/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 514 and 532 together.

As the Deputy will appreciate, it is the Garda Commissioner who is responsible for the distribution of resources, including personnel and Garda station opening hours, among the various Garda Divisions and I, as Minister, have no direct role in the matter. Garda management keeps this distribution of resources under continual review in the context of crime trends and policing

priorities so as to ensure that the optimum use is made of these resources.

I am advised that Caherciveen Garda station is open to the public from 9am to 5pm Monday to Sunday. It is important to remember that while the Garda station in question has reduced opening hours to the public, it is a functioning Garda station on a 24 hour basis.

I am informed by the Commissioner that in regard to the deployment of Garda personnel, a distribution model is used which takes into account all relevant factors including population, crime trends and the policing needs of each individual Garda Division. It is the responsibility of the Divisional Officer to allocate personnel within his/her Division which ensures local Garda management has the flexibility to deploy Garda resources to meet operational needs and address critical issues as they arise taking account of, amongst other factors, the incidence of crime and crime trends in each District in the Division.

As the Deputy will be aware Caherciveen forms part of the Killarney Garda District. I am further informed that on 30 April 2018, the latest date for which information is readily available the strength of the District was 107, including one Superintendent District officer based in District Headquarters, in Killarney Garda Station, and 18 Gardaí assigned to Caherciveen Garda Station. When appropriate, the work of local Gardaí is supported by a number of Garda national units such as the National Bureau of Criminal Investigation, the Armed Support Units, the Garda National Economic Crime Bureau and the Garda National Drugs and Organised Crime Bureau.

I can assure the Deputy that this Government is committed to ensuring a strong and visible police presence throughout the country in order to maintain and strengthen community engagement, provide reassurance to citizens and to deter crime. To achieve this the Government has put in place a plan for an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 personnel by 2021 comprising 15,000 Garda members, 2,000 Reserve members and 4,000 civilians. We are making real, tangible progress on achieving this goal.

Since the reopening of the Garda College in September 2014, just under 1,800 recruits have attested as members of An Garda Síochána and have been assigned to mainstream duties nationwide including 29 to the Kerry Division. Garda numbers, taking account of retirements, increased to 13,551 at the end of 2017 - a net increase of over 600 since the end of 2016.

I am pleased that funding is in place to maintain this high level of investment in the Garda workforce to ensure that the vision of an overall workforce of 21,000 by 2021 remains on track. This year a further 800 new Garda Recruits will enter the Garda College; some 400 of whom have already done so. In total, 800 Garda trainees are scheduled to attest during the year, some 200 of whom attested in March, with a further 200 attesting this Friday. Furthermore, Garda numbers, taking account of projected retirements, are on track to reach 14,000 by the end of this year.

Taking account of projected retirements, reaching a strength of 15,000 by 2021 will require some 1,600 more Garda members to be recruited on a phased basis over the next two years. This is an ambitious programme of accelerated recruitment. To ensure a continuous pipeline of candidates the Public Appointment Service on behalf of the Commissioner recently launched a new recruitment drive with a closing date of 7 June. Successful candidates from this new competition are expected to enter the Garda College in the second quarter of 2019.

In addition to the investment in more Gardaí, a further 500 civilians will also be recruited to fill critical skills gaps across the organisation and to facilitate the redeployment of Gardaí from administrative and technical duties to front-line operational duties. There are plans to strengthen the Garda Reserve with new Reserves expected to commence training in 2018.

This focus on investment in personnel is critical. We are now rebuilding the organisation and providing the Commissioner with the resources needed to deploy increasing numbers of Gardai. Undoubtedly, the ongoing recruitment process will support all Garda activities and enhance visibility within our communities and will enable the Commissioner to provide additional resources across every Garda District, including the Killarney District as new Garda recruits continue to come on stream.

Prison Education Service

515. Deputy Thomas P. Broughan asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the participation rates of prisoners in education during their sentences by prison; the budget for the provision of such services in 2017 and to date in 2018; the access to education for prisoners on restricted regimes; the number of prisoners completing further or higher education; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25098/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I wish to advise the Deputy that from 01 January 2018 to end April 2018, 31.85% of the overall prison population attended the prison education centres. A breakdown by prison is provided in the following table.

Education - Participation Rates

Institution	January 2018	February 2018	March 2018	April 2018
Arbour Hill	70.9%	50.0%	52.6%	46.8%
Castlerea	45.5%	33.1%	33.6%	33.8%
Cloverhill	22.9%	19.0%	17.2%	17.1%
Cork	46.0%	38.6%	34.7%	32.9%
Limerick	43.7%	36.5%	33.9%	46.2%
Loughan House	81.7%	59.7%	61.2%	33.9%
Midlands	37.8%	27.4%	25.0%	58.5%
Mountjoy Female	54.0%	39.5%	36.9%	26.5%
Mountjoy Male	19.8%	19.5%	16.7%	18.0%
Mountjoy West	58.1%	42.5%	47.0%	35.9%
Portlaoise	50.2%	44.2%	42.1%	45.7%
Shelton Abbey	55.7%	42.3%	42.6%	49.5%
Wheatfield	23.8%	19.4%	15.2%	19.6%
Average All Prisons	38.8%	30.4%	28.9%	29.3%

The Education budget for 2017 was €1,065m, this covers education fees, materials and equipment. The 2018 budget allocation is €1,265m.

There are currently 57 prisoners completing Open University courses.

I wish to advise the Deputy that the Irish Prison Service provides a wide range of rehabilitative programmes to those in custody that include education, vocational training, healthcare, psychiatric, psychological, counselling, welfare and spiritual services. These programmes can offer purposeful activity to those in custody while serving their sentences, and can encourage them to lead law abiding lives on release.

Prison Management take all reasonable steps to ensure that all prisoners who request access to education are provided with educational support. Education classes are provided to those

who are on restricted regimes where possible and all prisoners have access to reading materials, education and art resources on request.

Prisoner Complaints Procedures

516. Deputy Thomas P. Broughan asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of category A complaints submitted in 2017 and to date in 2018 by prison in tabular form; the length of time taken to complete each one and communicate the outcome of the decision to the complainant; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25099/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I wish to advise the Deputy that the information requested is contained in the following table.

I am advised by my officials in the Irish Prison Service that under the Irish Prison Service Complaints system, the outcome of each complaint should be communicated by the Governor to the complainant and the subject of the complaint within 14 days of date of receipt of the final investigation report.

I am further advised that there is a requirement to carry out investigations within a 3 month timeframe. In some cases this is not always feasible due to a number of operational factors, such as the availability of the complainant and/or subject/s for interview purposes, access to medical records and other similar issues. In such cases Investigators are required to submit a preliminary report and extensions of time to complete investigations are sanctioned on a case by case basis.

-	Prison where complaint was made	Date Assigned	Date report received	Number of Days
2017				
	Arbour Hill	27/11/2017	12/01/2018	45
Arbour Hill Total	1			
	Castlerea	11/10/2017	23/11/2017	42
	Castlerea	03/01/2018	27/02/2018	54
	Castlerea	08/11/2017	12/01/2018	64
	Castlerea	15/05/2017	30/07/2017	75
	Castlerea	22/05/2017	08/08/2017	76
	Castlerea	09/08/2017	01/11/2017	82
	Castlerea	09/08/2017	02/11/2017	83
	Castlerea	27/09/2017	09/05/2018	222
	Castlerea	29/11/2017	22/01/2018	53
Castlerea Total	9			
	Cloverhill	09/08/2017	29/08/2017	20
	Cloverhill	10/07/2017	21/08/2017	41
	Cloverhill	10/07/2017	21/08/2017	41
	Cloverhill	11/05/2017	01/07/2017	50
	Cloverhill	01/06/2017	21/07/2017	50
	Cloverhill	07/07/2017	28/08/2017	51
	Cloverhill	03/10/2017	27/11/2017	54

Questions - Written Answers

-	Prison where complaint was made	Date Assigned	Date report received	Number of Days
	Cloverhill	21/07/2017	05/10/2017	74
	Cloverhill	21/07/2017	06/10/2017	75
	Cloverhill	08/12/2017	26/02/2018	78
	Cloverhill	24/01/2017	23/04/2017	89
	Cloverhill	20/06/2017	14/11/2017	144
Cloverhill Total	12			
	Cork	09/08/2017	13/10/2017	64
	Cork	26/09/2017	22/12/2017	86
	Cork	26/07/2017	08/11/2017	102
	Cork	27/02/2017	06/06/2017	99
	Cork	26/07/2017	14/11/2017	108
Cork Total	5			
	Limerick	01/02/2017	25/07/2017	174
	Limerick	20/06/2017	04/01/2018	194
	Limerick	23/03/2017	18/07/2017	115
Limerick Total	3			
	Midlands	24/07/2017	21/09/2017	57
	Midlands	07/11/2017	05/01/2018	58
	Midlands	07/11/2017	05/01/2018	58
	Midlands	11/10/2017	05/01/2018	84
	Midlands	07/09/2017	04/12/2017	87
	Midlands	07/02/2017	06/05/2017	89
	Midlands	24/07/2017	25/10/2017	91
	Midlands	14/07/2017	24/10/2017	100
	Midlands	12/07/2017	03/11/2017	111
	Midlands	12/05/2017	05/09/2017	113
	Midlands	07/02/2017	28/08/2017	201
	Midlands	07/02/2017	10/01/2018	333
	Midlands	09/08/2017	19/10/2017	70
	Midlands	01/11/2017	31/01/2018	90
	Midlands	15/05/2017	20/06/2017	35
Midlands Total	15			
	Mountjoy	07/09/2017	02/11/2017	55
	Mountjoy	31/01/2017	04/04/17	64
	Mountjoy	04/01/2018	22/03/2018	78
	Mountjoy	27/07/2017	26/10/2017	89
	Mountjoy	27/09/2017	09/01/2018	102
	Mountjoy	24/08/2017	12/12/2017	108
	Mountjoy	13/09/2017	14/11/2017	61
	Mountjoy	23/05/2017	06/06/2017	13
	Mountjoy	09/08/2017	24/10/2017	75
Mountjoy Total	9			

-	Prison where complaint was made	Date Assigned	Date report received	Number of Days
	Portlaoise	17/01/2017	01/03/2017	44
	Portlaoise	13/02/2017	21/04/2017	68
	Portlaoise	01/02/2017	10/05/2017	99
	Portlaoise	13/02/2017	15/07/2017	152
	Portlaoise	15/03/2017	11/07/2017	116
	Portlaoise	01/06/2017	01/09/2017	90
Portlaoise Total	6			
	Wheatfield	23/03/2017	28/07/2017	125
	Wheatfield	13/02/2017	15/07/2017	152
	Wheatfield	28/03/2017	09/06/2017	71
	Wheatfield	16/06/2017	17/12/2017	181
Wheatfield Total	4			
2018				
	Castlerea	23/01/2018	31/03/2018	68
	Castlerea	23/01/2018	31/03/2018	68
Castlerea Total	2			
	Cloverhill	21/05/2018	21/05/2018	0
	Cloverhill	08/01/2018	02/02/2018	24
	Cloverhill	26/02/2018	21/05/2018	85
Cloverhill Total	3			
	Cork	25/01/2018	08/05/2018	103
Cork Total	1			
	Midlands	20/02/2018	07/03/2018	17
	Midlands	20/03/2018	15/05/2018	55
Midlands Total	2			
	Mountjoy	12/04/2018	16/05/2018	34
	Mountjoy	12/01/2018	19/02/2018	37
	Mountjoy	06/03/2018	16/04/2018	40
Mountjoy Total	3			
	Portlaoise	12/01/2018	09/05/2018	117
Portlaoise Total	1			
	Wheatfield	31/01/2018	04/05/2018	94
Wheatfield Total	1			

Prison Discipline

517. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of prisoners that received a disciplinary sanction for breach of prison discipline by prison in tabular form; the nature of those sanctions imposed over the period 2017 and 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25100/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by my officials in the Irish Prison Service that the number of prisoners that received a disciplinary sanction for breach of prison discipline by prison is as outlined in the following tables for the period

Questions - Written Answers

1 January 2017 to 31 December 2017 and 1 January 2018 to 31 May 2018.

1 January 2017 to 31 December 2017

Prison	Number of Prisoners
Arbour Hill Prison	10
Castlerea Prison	223
Cloverhill Remand Prison	232
Cork Prison	169
Limerick Prison	201
Loughan House Place Of Detn.	27
Midlands Prison	385
Mountjoy Prison (Female)	83
Mountjoy Prison (Male)	463
Portlaoise Prison	107
Shelton Abbey Place Of Detn.	22
Training Unit Place Of Detn.	3
Wheatfield Place of Detention	319
Overall	2,244

1 January 2018 to 31 May 2018

Prison	Number of Prisoners
Arbour Hill Prison	7
Castlerea Prison	121
Cloverhill Remand Prison	194
Cork Prison	88
Limerick Prison	99
Loughan House Place Of Detn.	4
Midlands Prison	221
Mountjoy Prison (Female)	40
Mountjoy Prison (Male)	295
Portlaoise Prison	73
Shelton Abbey Place Of Detn.	1
Wheatfield Place of Detention	211
Overall	1,354

When Prisoners receive a disciplinary sanction for breach of prison discipline it generates what is known as a 'P19' Report. The 'P19 System' refers to the disciplinary system in place under the Prisons Act, 2007, which allows Governors deal with prisoners who have committed breaches of the Prison Rules and allows Governors impose sanctions where a breach of the Rules has been proven to take place. Such sanction(s) are normally in the format of loss of certain privileges such as reduced phone calls, reduced visits, prohibition on the use of the Gym, prohibition on use of the Tuck Shop etc., for defined periods of time. At the higher end of the scale, Governors can also reduce remission, which in effect lengthens the period of time a prisoner is required to remain in prison.

Prison Facilities

518. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if the commitment made by him at the UNCAT hearing in 2017 that all prisons would have child friendly visiting conditions by July 2018 has been honoured; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25109/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I wish to advise the Deputy that the Irish Prison Service have confirmed that, in line with the commitments made at the 2017 UNCAT hearing, all prisons now have child friendly visiting conditions.

The Irish Prison Service Strategic Plan 2016-2018 sets out the commitment of the Irish Prison Service to strengthen family supports to facilitate on-going contact with prisoners while in custody and their reintegration post release, with appropriate supports and programmes.

The Director General of the Irish Prison Service established the Families and Imprisonment Group, which is chaired by a prison Governor and includes representatives from Tusla, The childhood Development Initiative, the Probation Service, the Prison Officers Association and representatives from various prisons. The group was tasked in particular to address the needs of children and families as highlighted in the report published by the Irish Penal Reform Trust entitled ‘Picking up the Pieces: The rights and needs of children and families affected by imprisonment.’

A key element of this is the provision of appropriate child and family friendly visiting facilities.

Prison Visitor Centres, which are partly funded by the Irish Prison Service, play a vital role in humanising the visiting experience of prisoner families through the provision of refreshments, befriending and child play services. There are visitor centres in the West Dublin, Mountjoy and Midlands campus and they are run by the St Vincent de Paul.

The West Dublin Campus visitor centres provides a hospitality/family support service which includes information provision on a wide range of issues. There are childcare areas which provide toys, arts and crafts. A similar provision is made at Mountjoy and the Midlands.

Bedford Row operates a family friendly hospitality Centre at Limerick Prison. This is part funded by the Irish Prison Service and includes the dispensing of refreshments, the giving out of play material to children and also befriending and information provision. Targeted work with prisoners children is also a focus of the work of the Centre.

Cork and Castlerea have smaller visitor centres which are run by local community groups. Castlerea has recently constructed a new visitor area, which includes enhanced family visit spaces.

All prisons have designated areas to facilitate family visits which include a family friendly space, round tables or family seating and access to play materials.

In addition temporary release for access/visits to children for family occasions is regularly approved in most prisons.

The Irish Prison Service targets family friendly training to ‘front of house’ staff, which aims to improve staff awareness of the effects of imprisonment on families and allows staff to appropriately support families and children visiting prisons.

The Irish Prison Service also provide training in Children First to all staff, which ensures that any child protection and welfare concerns are dealt with appropriately. Each prison has a Child Safeguarding Statement, as required under the Children First Act 2015 and one or more

Designated Liaison Persons, who are the main point of contact in each prison for child welfare.

All of our prisons facilitate visits on Saturdays to take account of the needs of families visiting persons in custody. Sunday visits are allowed at the two Open Centres and at Cloverhill.

The Families and Imprisonment Group carried out surveys in 2018 at Visitor Centres and also engaged in Family Forums, in order to consult with families and children visiting prisons. The learning from these will be used to further develop family and child friendly visiting facilities in all prisons.

Direct Provision System

519. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his views on the findings of a report (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25112/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The *Report of the Working Group to Report to Government on Improvements to the Protection Process, including Direct Provision and Supports to Asylum Seekers*, also known as the Justice McMahon report, was published in June 2015. Its recommendations have implications for a number of Government Departments and services.

My Department has since published three progress reports on the implementation of its 173 recommendations; the first in June 2016, the second in February of 2017 and a third and final report in July of 2017. All three reports are available to view on my Department's website www.justice.ie.

The final progress report shows that 133 recommendations have been reported as fully implemented and a further 36 are in progress or partially implemented. This represents a 98% full or partial implementation rate.

The Working Paper dated December 2017, referred to by the Deputy, acknowledges that considerable progress has been made, and in particular highlights as "significant improvements" developments such as the introduction of the Single Procedure in the International Protection Act, 2015; general improvements in living conditions; and the Government's decision to opt-in to the Reception Conditions Directive.

The improvements to living conditions for applicants for international protection have been significant over recent years. These include the implementation of self or communal catering arrangements in a number of accommodation centres. As a result of this initiative, over 1,500 residents are now able to prepare meals of their own choosing. In addition, there have been improvements to a number of outdoor playgrounds and football pitches to provide for 'all-weather' facilities and the introduction of teenagers rooms in centres to provide social areas for this age group. Friends of the Centre groups have also been established in each centre. This initiative aims to bring residents, community and voluntary groups together with a view to increasing integration opportunities and providing for the development of greater community linkages with the residents and the centre.

Following on from the McMahon Report, a Standards Advisory Group was set up in 2017. The work of this group is to build on the recommendations of McMahon and to develop a set of standards for accommodation provided for those people seeking the protection of the State. The Standards will meet the minimum standards set out in the Recast Reception Conditions Directive and EASO Guidance on Reception Conditions: Operational Standards and Indicators

and will also take account of national developments in the provision of services to those in the protection process. They will take due cognisance of the responsibility to promote equality, prevent discrimination and protect the human rights of employees, customers, service users and everyone affected by policies and plans as defined by the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty. The group is comprised of members from a range of organisations supporting refugees as well as staff from a number of government Departments and will deliver a Working Document in September 2018 following widespread consultation.

The Government approved an opt into the EU (Recast) Reception Conditions Directive (2013/33/EU). The decision to opt-in to the Directive will bring Ireland into line with our EU partners and place the entire system on a legislative basis, which will be subject to EU oversight. This is a significant and positive measure, not only in addressing the issue of labour market access, but also extending to children's rights, rights for unaccompanied minors, vulnerable people, new appeals processes, healthcare and education provision. By opting into the Directive, another important recommendation of the Justice McMahon report will be implemented bringing Ireland into line with the European Union norms.

I remain fully committed to working with all stakeholders, some of whom will have differing views on the extent of implementation of some recommendations, to ensure the continuing implementation of a wide range of reforms in this area, including those recommended by the Justice McMahon report.

Crime Data

520. Deputy Sean Fleming asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of stolen firearms that were used in crimes in each of the years 2013 to 2017 and to date in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25120/18]

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

Court Accommodation Provision

521. Deputy Michael Moynihan asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the steps he will take to preserve the courthouse building in Kanturk, County Cork: if his attention has been drawn to the fact that the building has been damaged by vandals in recent weeks; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25127/18]

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, including the provision of accommodation for court sittings, is the responsibility of the Courts Service which is independent in exercising its functions.

However, in order to be of assistance to the Deputy, I have had enquiries made and the Courts Service has advised that Kanturk Courthouse was closed as a court venue in 2010. The building is in the ownership of the Courts Service and, since that time, the Courts Service has offered the courthouse for alternative public use at no cost to Cork County Council and to the Office of Public Works. The Courts Service has further advised that there has been no request for the building to be transferred to another public body to date.

In the event that the building is not required for use by another public body, the Courts Service will consider the sale of the building. In the meantime the building has been made available for use on Culture Nights and for Arts Festivals.

The Courts Service has also informed me that remedial works were undertaken on the building in 2013 and more recently repair works were undertaken following Storm Ophelia. A break-in to the building occurred in early June 2018 and the Courts Service has made arrangements to secure the building.

Garda Reserve

522. Deputy Maurice Quinlivan asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of Garda Reserves in each year since its establishment in 2006. [25164/18]

523. Deputy Maurice Quinlivan asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of Garda Reserves in each Limerick city division; the number of reserves in each division that went on to become gardaí or are in training in each of the past ten years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25165/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 522 and 523 together.

As the Deputy will appreciate, the Garda Commissioner is responsible for the carrying on and managing generally the administration and business of the An Garda Síochána including arranging for the recruitment, training and appointment of the Reserve members. Further, 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 these matters. Garda management keeps this distribution of resources under continual review in the context of crime trends and policing priorities so as to ensure that the optimum use is made of these resources.

I am advised by the Commissioner that the strength of the Reserve on the 30 April 2018 was 562, 27 of whom are attached to the Limerick Division. It is regrettable that there has been a substantial reduction in the strength of the Reserve in recent years from a peak of 1,164 in 2013. The fall-off arises from a range of factors, not least the lifting in 2014 of the moratorium on recruitment of trainee Gardaí which has affected Reserve numbers in two ways: firstly, since 2014, 246 serving Reserves have successfully applied to become trainee Gardaí, and secondly, resources in both An Garda Síochána and in the Public Appointments Service (PAS) have been focused on delivering an accelerated programme of recruitment of full time members of An Garda Síochána.

I am sure that the Deputy will agree, notwithstanding the very valuable contribution of Reserve members throughout the country, that it was the right decision, with finite resources, to prioritise the running of recruitment campaigns to replenish the full-time ranks of An Garda Síochána over the last three years.

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

With the plan to reach 15,000 Garda members well on track, it was possible for the Commissioner and the Public Appointments Service to undertake a new recruitment campaign for

Garda Reserves last March. That competition attracted 2,394 applicants of whom 498 successfully completed the initial stages carried out by PAS. These applications are currently being processed by the Garda Appointments Office. The time frame for this can vary due to a number of factors, including the length of the vetting process which may, for example, be more time consuming if the applicant has resided abroad or is deferred for medical reasons. It is expected that the first of the successful candidates will commence training in the Garda College in the coming months.

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

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

For the Deputy's information I have set out in the tables the number of Reserves in each of the years requested by the Deputy in tabular form. I also include a table setting out the total number of Garda Reserves who have commenced training as a Garda Trainee from 2007 up to May 2018. Please note, that due to the moratorium on recruitment introduced in 2010 there was no recruitment of Garda Trainees from 2010 until 2014.

Garda Reserve 2006 - 2018

Year	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Total	36	217	331	478	700	877	991

Year	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018*
Total	1164	1124	953	695	589	562

*Up to 30 April 2018.

Garda Reserves who have commenced as Garda Trainees from 2007 up to May 2018

Year	Division	No. of Reserves	Total
2007	DMR North Central	1	3
	DMR South Central	1	
	DMR North	1	
2008	Cork City	2	10
	Cork North	1	
	DMR North	1	
	DMR North Central	3	
2009	DMR South	1	10
	DMR South Central	4	
	DMR West	2	
	Galway	2	
2010	Sligo/Leitrim	1	10

Questions - Written Answers

Year	Division	No. of Reserves	Total
	Tipperary	1	
	Waterford	1	
	Wicklow	1	20
2009	DMR North	3	
	DMR North Central	1	
	DMR South Central	1	
	Kilkenny/Carlow	1	
	Cavan/Monaghan	1	7
2014	Cork City	2	
	Cork West	1	
	DMR East	1	
	DMR North	3	
	DMR North Central	3	
	DMR South	6	
	Donegal	1	
	Galway	3	
	Kerry	2	
	Kildare	1	
	Kilkenny/Carlow	1	
	Laois/Offaly	1	
	Limerick	2	
	Louth	1	
	Mayo	1	
	Meath	2	
	Tipperary	1	
	Waterford	2	34
2015	Cavan/Monaghan	1	
	Clare	2	
	Cork City	2	
	Cork North	3	
	Cork West	4	
	DMR North	4	
	DMR North Central	6	
	DMR South	2	
	DMR South Central	3	
	DMR West	5	
	Galway	3	
	Kerry	1	
	Kildare	1	
	Laois/Offaly	1	
	Louth	3	
	Mayo	1	
	Meath	4	
	Roscommon/Longford	1	

Year	Division	No. of Reserves	Total
	Sligo/Leitrim	2	
	Tipperary	4	
	Waterford	2	
	Westmeath	1	
	Wexford	1	
	Wicklow	1	58
2016	Cavan/Monaghan	2	
	Cork City	9	
	Cork North	3	
	Cork West	6	
	DMR East	2	
	DMR North	2	
	DMR North Central	9	
	DMR South	2	
	DMR South Central	3	
	DMR West	11	
	Donegal	4	
	Galway	2	
	Kerry	4	
	Kildare	6	
	Kilkenny/Carlow	5	
	Laois/Offaly	1	
	Limerick	9	
	Louth	2	
	Mayo	5	
	Meath	3	
	Sligo/Leitrim	2	
	Tipperary	4	
	Waterford	2	
	Westmeath	1	
	Wexford	7	
	Wicklow	2	108
2017	DMR South Central	1	
	Cavan/Monaghan	1	
	Cork City	5	
	Cork West	1	
	DMR East	2	
	DMR North Central	2	
	DMR South	1	
	DMR South Central	1	
	Donegal	2	
	Galway	1	
	Kerry	1	

Year	No. of Reserves	Total	
	Kildare	2	
	Limerick	3	
	Louth	2	
	Roscommon/Longford	2	
	Sligo/Leitrim	1	
	Tipperary	2	
	Waterford	3	33
2018	Cork West	2	
	DMR North	1	
	DMR South	2	
	DMR South Central	1	
	Donegal	1	
	Kildare	1	
	Laois/Offaly	1	
	Louth	1	
	Meath	1	
	Roscommon/Longford	1	
	Wexford	1	13
Total		276	

Commencement of Legislation

524. Deputy Mattie McGrath asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the sections and parts of all legislation brought forward by his Department in each of the past four years that have yet to be commenced; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25182/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): In respect of the Deputy's question please find the following table which outlines the Acts or parts of Acts brought forward by my Department in the past four years that are awaiting commencement.

TITLE OF ACT	ACT/PART/SECTION NOT YET COMMENCED	REASON ACT/PART/SECTION NOT YET COMMENCED
Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act 2015	The Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act 2015 (Commencement of Certain Provisions) Order 2016 (S.I. No. 515 of 2016), brought some provisions of Part 1 (Preliminary and General) and Part 9 (Director of the Decision Support Service) of the Act into operation on 17 October 2016. These provisions were brought into operation in order to progress the setting up of the Decision Support Service (DSS) and to enable the process of recruitment of the Director of the DSS to begin. The remaining provisions of the Act for which the Minister for Justice and Equality has responsibility have not yet been commenced. The commencement of Part 8 of the Act, which provides for a legislative framework for advance healthcare directives, is a matter for the Minister for Health.	The key preparations are being put in place to allow for further commencement orders for the provisions of the 2015 Act to be made when the Decision Support Service is ready to roll out the new decision-making support options. The Director, who was appointed in October 2017, is also working in a very determined way to get the necessary staff resources, processes, IT system, expert panels, codes of practice and regulations in place in order that the Decision Support Service can be up and running as quickly as possible. There are many complex strands to this work, including involvement of multiple organisations. Every effort is underway to ensure that the Decision Support Service has all necessary capacity to open for business as soon as possible. The Department has received an outline implementation plan from the Director which contains monthly milestones for realisation of the objective of an active DSS. As time goes on, every effort will be made by all sides to achieve tightening of the timeframes where possible and the situation will continue to be monitored closely by the Steering Group. While it is not possible at the moment to provide an exact timeframe for the full commencement of the 2015 Act, every effort is underway to ensure that the Decision Support Service has all necessary capacity to open for business as soon as possible.

TITLE OF ACT	ACT/PART/SECTION NOT YET COMMENCED	REASON ACT/PART/SECTION NOT YET COMMENCED
Children and Family Relationships Act 2015	Parts 2 and 3 of the Act (Sections 4 to 42 inclusive) which provide for parentage through donor-assisted human reproduction (DAHR). Other provisions of the Act which relate to DAHR have not yet been commenced as they are linked to Parts 2 and 3. Part 9 of the Act (sections 92 to 99 inclusive) provides for a number of amendments to the Civil Registration Act 2004. No provision of Part 9 has yet been commenced. Part 11 of the Act (Sections 101 to 134 inclusive) in relation to adoption has not been commenced. This Part of the Act was repealed by the Adoption (Amendment) Act 2017. Section 177 of the Act in relation to amendment of the Adoptive Leave act 1995	The commencement of Parts 2 and 3, relating to donor-assisted human reproduction, is a matter for the Department of Health. Other provisions of the Act which relate to DAHR have not yet been commenced as they are linked to Parts 2 and 3 and cannot be commenced until those Parts are commenced. Some sections of Part 9 cannot be commenced until Parts 2 and 3 are brought into operation. Other sections are dependent on provisions of the Civil Registration (Amendment) Act 2014 being commenced. The Department is liaising with the Department of Social Protection in relation to scheduling the commencement of these sections. Part 11 relating to adoption has now been repealed by the Adoption (Amendment) Act 2017. Following adoption of the 34th amendment to the Constitution and its subsequent legislative changes, my Department identified a lacuna in the Adoptive Leave Act 1995 that prevents male same-sex married couples from availing of adoptive leave and benefits. To address this lacuna, my Department has prepared draft legislative proposals that will amend the Adoptive Leave Act and will afford the same entitlements to adoptive leave and benefits to all couples who are married, co-habiting or who are in a civil partnership, irrespective of gender.
Civil Debt (Procedures) Act 2015	Entire Act	Commencement requires systems to be put in place in the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection to handle deductions from social welfare payments, and Rules of Court to enable the District Court to deal with the enforcement of court orders (abolition of imprisonment for debtors) and in respect of the processes for attachment of earnings and for the relevant District Court hearings under the Act. Contact is being maintained with the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection in relation to commencement matters.
Civil Liability (Amendment) Act 2017	Whole Act	Enacted on 15 November 2017. Rules of Court have to be prepared in relation to the provisions of the Act regarding periodic payments orders before they can be commenced. These rules of court are expected to be finalised in the coming weeks. Commencement of Part 4 of the Act regarding open disclosure of patient safety incidents is a matter for the Department of Health.
Court of Appeal Act 2014	Section 73 insofar as it relates to certain enactments specified in Schedule 1 to the Act	The Schedule in question provides for the repeal of certain enactments. The repeals yet to be commenced concern the Court of Criminal Appeal and cannot be commenced until such time as all cases before that Court have been brought to a conclusion. Final confirmation is awaited from the Courts Service as to the timing of the Commencement SI and it is anticipated that this matter can be brought to a conclusion within a matter of weeks.
Criminal Justice (Forensic Evidence and DNA Database System) Act 2014	Sections 67(2)(e); 72(2)(f) (insofar as this paragraph relates to Chapter 2 of Part 12) and 110-121.	It was necessary to defer commencement of these provisions, which mainly relate to international cooperation by way of automated searching, comparison and exchange of DNA data or dactyloscopic data, until required logistical arrangements to facilitate this have been finalised. These arrangements include, inter alia, piloting and testing the DNA Database System for international data exchange and obtaining EU Council approval before personal data can be provided to other Member States.
Criminal Justice (Mutual Assistance) (Amendment) Act 2015	Sections 24 and 34 (in so far as S. 65(4A) of the Criminal Justice Act 1994 (15/1994) inserted by that section relates to S.60D of the Criminal Justice (Mutual Assistance) Act 2008 (7/2008))	Both sections refer to the provision of financial penalties. Provisions dealing with financial penalties have not yet commenced. Section 24 deals with mutual recognition of fines and requires a designation of the appropriate authority by the Minister, which is under consideration.
Criminal Justice Act 2017	Sections 2, 4, 11 and 12Section 7	Awaiting updates to the Garda Custody Regulations prior to commencement. Section 7 of the new Criminal Justice Act 2017 amends Section 6B of the Bail Act 1997, as inserted by Section 11 of the Criminal Justice Act 2007 concerning the electronic monitoring of persons on bail.
Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2017	Part 5 (Sections 28 to 32): Section 52:	Part 5 was drafted to update the existing incest laws in order to equalise the penalty for incest by a female with that which applies to incest by a male (i.e., life imprisonment). At Report stage in Dáil Éireann the section to increase the penalty for incest by a female was deleted. The General Scheme of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) (Amendment) Bill 2018 provides that the penalty for incest for a male and a female be equalised at 10 years. Part 5 will not be commenced until the provisions of this Bill have been considered by the Oireachtas. This section provides for an amendment to the Criminal Procedure Act 2010 and is consequential to Part 5 of the Bill relating to incest.
Criminal Justice (Suspended Sentences of Imprisonment) Act 2017	Entire Act	District Court Rules required to facilitate commencement of the Act are being finalised.
Data Protection Act 2018	Section 7(3) (insofar as it relates to the revocation of the Data Protection Act 1988 (Section 5(1)(d)) (Specification) Regulations 1993 (S.I. No. 95 of 1993), insofar as those Regulations relate to the functions of the Central Bank of Ireland to which Regulation 3 of those Regulations applies); Sections 25 and 176(b) Section 30	Not yet commenced pending the making of Regulations under Section 60 of the Act. Not yet commenced as the necessary procedures have to be put in place to give the Data Protection Commission its own Vote. The Office of the Attorney General has advised my Department that insofar as Section 30 purports to make it an offence for any company or corporate body to process the personal data of a child for the purposes of direct marketing or profiling, such a prohibition appears to go beyond the margin of discretion afforded to Member States in giving further effect to the GDPR and would conflict with Article 6(1)(f), read in conjunction with Recital (47). Put simply, it is not an option for a Member State to unilaterally prohibit a category of processing activities which might otherwise be lawful under Article 6.1(f). Since commencement of Section 30 could, therefore, give rise to a substantial risk of infringement proceedings against the State pursuant to Article 258 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, I have requested my Department to clarify the matter with the European Commission.

Questions - Written Answers

TITLE OF ACT	ACT/PART/SECTION NOT YET COMMENCED	REASON ACT/PART/SECTION NOT YET COMMENCED
Domestic Violence Act 2018	Whole Act	Enacted on 8 May 2018. Rules of Court have to be prepared in relation to the provisions of the Act regarding civil domestic violence orders before they can be commenced. Forms and documents relating to domestic violence orders on Courts Service IT systems will need updating. The commencement of the provisions of the Act regarding new criminal offences of forced marriage and coercive control, and the provision making the relationship between defendant and victim an aggravating factor in sentencing for certain offences can proceed independently of commencement of the provisions relating to civil domestic violence orders. The Department is liaising with the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection regarding the commencement of the provisions that repeal the current exemptions that allow persons under the age of 18 to marry.
Employment Permits (Amendment) Act 2014 (No. 26 of 2014)	Section 35 (a),(b) and (c) and Section 36	Pending finalisation with An Garda Síochána of arrangements for the transfer of the immigration registration function to the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS)
Legal Services Regulation Act 2015	Part 1 – Section 5. Part 2 – paragraphs (c) to (f) of Section 13(2), Section 31, Section 33 and Sections 35 & 36. Parts 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7. Part 8 – Sections 99 to 117 and Section 121. Parts 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15	Parts 1 and 2 of the Act were commenced as necessary to support the setting-up and appointment of the Legal Services Regulatory Authority which held its first meeting on 26 October 2016. During its first year the Authority, under Sections 118 to 120 as commenced, also completed a series of time-bound public consultations and reports on new legal business models. The Authority is now engaged in the essential planning and capacity building for the roll-out of its remaining functions under the Act which will be supported by the Department of Justice and Equality in the commencement of the relevant provisions concerned. Part 15 does not fall under the remit of the Authority.
Paternity Leave and Benefit Act 2016	Section 2(1)(b)(iii)	The Section cannot be commenced until the Assisted Human Reproduction Bill 2017 is progressed through the Oireachtas and is enacted.

Refugee Resettlement Programme

525. **Deputy Pat Casey** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the measures being taken to accommodate refugees from the Syrian crisis; the way they can be integrated into society and allowed to work; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25224/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton):

The Irish Refugee Protection Programme (IRPP) was established by Government Decision on 10th September 2015 as a direct response to the humanitarian crisis that developed in Southern Europe as a consequence of mass migration from areas of conflict in the Middle East and Africa. Under this programme the Government pledged to accept a total of 4,000 persons into the State including through the recently announced IRPP Humanitarian Assistance Programme (IHAP), which will provide for the admission of up to 530 immediate family members of Irish citizens, persons with Convention refugee or subsidiary protection status and persons with programme refugee status.

The implementation of the IRPP for resettling Syrian refugees requires a high level of coordination among service delivery agencies at both national and local level. Service provision is mainstreamed and all the main statutory service providers such as Government departments, the HSE, Tusla and Local Authorities are represented on the national Taskforce which oversees delivery of the programme. In general, coordination is ensured via the IRPP which is part of the Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration (OPMI) within my Department. OPMI is the primary entity responsible for delivering resettlement via a range of statutory and non-statutory agencies. It has overseen the humanitarian resettlement programmes run by Ireland since they were established in 2000.

My Department is mobilising European Union Funding under the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) in support of Ireland's resettlement efforts, including to fund supports provided through local authorities to the refugees. Local authorities play a critical role in ensuring the success of each resettlement through the provision of housing and the implementation of a process carried out by an "implementing partner" with expertise in community integration and relevant supports.

My Department also works closely with the Irish Red Cross which was assigned responsibility by the Government for administering public pledges of support, especially in the area of accommodation. Its case workers and support team work closely with IRPP and refugees to find suitable accommodation options.

Programme refugees have the right to work in Ireland. Supports are provided under the auspices of the programme to enable them to be in a position to secure employment. These include:

- The IRPP liaises with the Department of Education and Skills and the local Education and Training Board in each catchment area to ensure that groups receive a Language Training and Cultural Orientation programme and to facilitate access to education.

- Free childcare is provided wherever possible to allow the adults to attend the Language and Orientation programme in their Emergency Reception and Orientation Centre (EROC).

- Local service providers, volunteers and NGOs visit the EROCs to provide services and information and to support and befriend the asylum seekers or refugees.

Increasingly, the IRPP is focusing on initiatives which assist with labour market activation for refugees and is working with the Irish Red Cross and other bodies to facilitate access to employment. Various initiatives are also developing in the educational sphere.

With regard to integration more generally, the Migrant Integration Strategy, which was published on 7 February 2017, offers a blueprint for Government action to promote the integration of all migrants who are legally in the State, including refugees, for the period to 2020. It sees integration as a two-way process involving action by migrants and non-migrants alike. The Strategy comprises 76 specific actions under a number of themes to be implemented by Government Departments and Agencies, the business sector, employers, local authorities and community and voluntary sector organisations. The Employment and Pathways to Work theme contains actions designed to enable migrants, including refugees, to participate in employment. Among other actions, the Strategy requires Government Departments and agencies to address integration in strategy statements; to ensure appropriate, regular engagement with NGOs representing migrant groups; and to provide intercultural awareness training.

The strategy includes targeted initiatives to promote migrant entrepreneurship, to encourage migrants into the Civil Service and onto State boards and to improve English language provision in education and training. It is accompanied by a Communities Integration Fund which provides funding for 131 initiatives by community organisations aimed at promoting migrant integration and facilitating social inclusion at the local level.

The strategy is available on the website of the Office for Promotion for Migrant Integration at www.integration.ie.

It is my firm intention that the model of integration and support is one which will evolve and develop over the coming months and years with a view to offering refugees increasing opportunities to enhance their own lives. It is for this reason I am examining initiatives such as community sponsorship to support the long-term integration process.

Visa Applications

526. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the progress to date in respect of an appeal for a visa by a person (details supplied); when a decision is likely

to be finalised; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25227/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that the person concerned was refused a long-stay Join Family Visa on 04 April 2018, and an appeal was received in the Visa Office in Dublin on 05 June 2018.

Appeals are processed in the order in which they are received in order to be fair to all applicants. While every effort is made to process appeals received as soon as possible, processing times will vary having regard to the volume of appeals received, the resources available to process them and the complexity of the application and subsequent appeal. Processing times may also increase where the provision of additional documentation is supplied and a detailed assessment of family rights under the Constitution and the European Convention on Human Rights are required. Unfortunately, I cannot at this time give a definitive date as to when this particular appeal will be finalised.

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 INIS is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

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

Garda Transport Data

527. Deputy Thomas P. Broughan asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of mountain bikes allocated to each station within the Garda R and J districts in each of the years 2016, 2017 and to date in 2018; the number of gardaí trained in the use of mountain bikes in each of the years in question; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25244/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Deputy will appreciate that the Garda Commissioner is responsible for managing and controlling generally the administration and business of An Garda Síochána, including by arranging for the training of its members and civilian staff and I, as Minister, have no direct role in the matter.

I am advised by the Commissioner that mountain bike training was not provided in the Garda R District (Coolock District) and J District (Raheny District) in 2016 and 2018. In 2017 4 members of An Garda Síochána from the Raheny District successfully completed mountain bike training.

I am further advised that the information requested by the Deputy regarding the number of mountain bikes allocated to each station within the Coolock District and the Raheny District in each of the years 2016, 2017 and to date in 2018 is currently being collated and I will write to the Deputy when this information is available.

Ministerial Meetings

528. Deputy Fergus O'Dowd asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Question No. 102 of 21 May 2017, if a meeting can be arranged between him and the

person to discuss their case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25270/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I can inform the Deputy that my Department wrote to the person in question on 6 June 2018 to provide them with an update in relation to his request for a meeting.

The Deputy will appreciate that I, as Minister, have no role in relation to the management of Garda investigations or, indeed, the prosecution or trial of alleged offences. This is a long-standing principle of our system of justice. The role of An Garda Síochána is to investigate alleged offences, to gather whatever evidence may be available and to submit a report to the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP). Any information in relation to possible criminal acts should be provided directly to An Garda Síochána for investigation. The question of whether or not a particular person should be prosecuted and for what criminal offence is the responsibility of the DPP, who is completely independent in carrying out her functions.

Similarly, the Courts, subject only to the Constitution and the law, are independent in the exercise of their judicial functions and the conduct of any court case is a matter entirely for the presiding judge. It is not open to me to comment or intervene in any way in relation to how particular proceedings are conducted or, indeed, on the outcome of such proceedings.

If someone is not satisfied with the manner in which their complaints have been handled by An Garda Síochána, then it is open to them to contact the Garda Síochána Ombudsman Office (GSOC). GSOC, as you are no doubt aware, is the independent body charged with receiving complaints from the public concerning members of An Garda Síochána.

Unfortunately, it is not open to me to intervene in this case in the manner the person in question is seeking. It is An Garda Síochána, specifically the Garda Commissioner and his management team, who are responsible for investigating all forms of alleged criminality in the State in the first instance and not the Minister for Justice and Equality. Accordingly, I cannot accede to this particular meeting request.

Notwithstanding the above, it is, of course, open to the person in question to seek independent legal advice in relation to their concerns, if they so wish.

Refugee Resettlement Programme

529. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will address a matter (details supplied) regarding refugees in Killarney town; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25295/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): There has never been a legal impediment preventing those seeking international protection in Ireland from being involved in voluntary work or activities and many have chosen to do so over the years.

Information provided by the Reception and Integration Agency of my Department would suggest that there are a number of activities available to international protection applicants based in Killarney, some of which are listed below:

- Local athletics club: There is a run every Saturday morning in the Killarney National Park
- Local football club: Soccer balls are available for residents to play on the pitch in the park
- County Kerry Cricket Club in Tralee

- Local musicians group: The group practice almost every afternoon.
- Daily English classes
- Manual Handling Course
- Local Gym: residents can avail of a reduced rate

In addition to the above, the notice board in Linden House regularly provides updates on other seasonal events and activities. Various workshops and courses are also available through Killarney Asylum Seekers Initiative (KASI) who are a local support group.

Any resident of Linden House who would like to volunteer for activities, such as Tidy Towns, should contact KASI or speak to the centre's management to be linked into the various groups and organisations in this area.

Departmental Agencies Staff Data

530. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Question No. 88 of 7 May 2017, the number of new staff hires engaged in the provision of services in the area of international protection; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25424/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): Further to the response to the Deputy's previous Parliamentary Question in this regard, the Legal Aid Board operates a mixed model of service delivery to persons seeking international protection in the State. This incorporates both the use of in-house staff, including solicitor staff, working in law centres and the referral of cases to private solicitors on a panel.

The service provision is split between two units, the Refugee Documentation Centre (RDC), and the International Protection Unit (IPU). Since May 2017, eight new staff have been engaged to increase the provision of these services. The Deputy should note that, while one hire was to cover maternity leave and another was an intern post, these new hires are in addition to the 13 indicated in the response to Parliamentary Question No. 88 of 17 May 2017. These are broken down as below:

Unit	Grade	FTE
Refugee Documentation Centre	Executive Officer	1.0
	Clerical Officer	1.0
	Clerical Officer	1.0
	Intern (for a period of 6 weeks)	1.0
International Protection Unit	Managing Solicitor Grade I	1.0
	Solicitor Grade III	1.0
	Solicitor Grade III	1.0
	Legal Clerk (Maternity Cover)	1.0

The Deputy should also note that the Board provides legal services in relation to a range of

important civil issues. While the Board is developing specialisation in its staff, it also wishes to ensure flexibility in order to address areas of particular demand or priority at a point in time. Therefore additional staff covering those broader civil law issues can also be engaged in international protection cases.

Asylum Applications

531. Deputy Catherine Connolly asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the reason the average wait time for first interview for asylum applications has increased from 11 weeks in 2015 to 18 to 20 months in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25425/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will be aware, the International Protection Act 2015, which introduced a single application procedure, was commenced on 31 December 2016.

Under the single procedure, recommendations at first instance are made by the International Protection Office (IPO), which replaced the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner (ORAC). Appeals in respect of negative first instance protection recommendations are considered by the statutorily independent International Protection Appeals Tribunal, which replaced the former Refugee Appeals Tribunal (RAT).

The fact that scheduling times have lengthened in the IPO can be attributed to a number of reasons.

Firstly, as part of the transition arrangements for the new single procedure process, the IPO was required to take responsibility for the processing of over 3,000 cases which were not finalised by the former ORAC or RAT. These applications reverted for processing under the transitional provisions of the 2015 Act and added significantly to the IPO caseload. All of these transitional cases had to be contacted individually by the IPO to inform them of the relevant provisions of the 2015 Act and how the transitional provisions would affect their applications. All applicants received comprehensive documentation including a new Application for International Protection Questionnaire (IPO 2) which, on return, had to be translated and associated with the relevant files. This process meant that the IPO was not fully up and running in terms of interviewing until the second quarter of 2017. The concentration on the elimination of the inherited backlog, in line with the system of prioritisation agreed with the UNHCR, has also reduced the ability of the IPO to address more current cases.

Secondly, there was a 30% increase in applications for international protection in 2017 (including EU relocation applicants) which has put additional pressure on the processing system. In addition, applications for international protection have also increased in 2018 (to end May) by over 30% as compared with the same period in 2017.

Thirdly, the 2015 Act substantially changed the processing arrangements for the consideration of applications for international protection and for permission to remain decisions by introducing a more comprehensive single procedure. On the one hand, this development has, of course, resulted in a more streamlined system enabling all the grounds for a person to remain in the State to be determined as part of one process in the IPO. However, compared with the jurisdiction at first instance of the former ORAC, which considered applications for refugee status alone, caseworkers in the IPO are required to investigate applications on the basis of three comprehensive elements namely; whether the applicant is a refugee or, if not; whether the applicant is eligible for subsidiary protection or, if not and thirdly, are there grounds to grant a person humanitarian permission to remain in the State. While considering all aspects together

does, of course, create economies of scale in investigating applications as part of a more streamlined single procedure process, the level of investigation required is more comprehensive and consequently more time consuming.

In terms of progress to date, I can inform the Deputy that considerable work has been undertaken to get the new process up and running. For example, in terms of scheduling of interviews, the IPO scheduled over 2,400 single procedure interviews (including in respect of EU relocation cases) in 2017. In 2018 (to end May), some 1500 interviews have been scheduled.

In relation to recommendations/decisions, some 1,780 recommendations/decisions in respect of international protection and permission to remain were made by the IPO in 2017. This included some 750 recommendations in respect of the grant of international protection. In addition, some 1,634 recommendations/decisions have been made by the IPO in 2018 (to end May 2018). This includes international protection recommendations (including EU relocation cases), permission to remain decisions and permission to remain reviews. For 2018, there were some 572 international protection grants and over 100 grants of permission to remain made by the IPO. All 2018 figures are provisional.

Based on current predictions, the IPO is in line to make some 3,500 recommendations and decisions in 2018.

Considerable additional resources have and are being allocated to the IPO to assist it in undertaking its statutory functions with a view to processing the volume of cases on hands as soon as possible. As at the beginning of June 2018, the current staffing complement in the IPO is 135. In addition, there are some 55 serving members of the IPO Case Processing Panel. To enable the IPO to carry out their functions to optimum effect and to assist in the reduction of caseloads, the current Case Processing Panel is being further expanded at the present time on the basis of public advertisement.

The resources assigned to the IPO, as well as work processes in that organisation, are being kept under ongoing review and additional resources will be allocated as these become available so that the cases on hand, both those applications preceding the commencement of the 2015 Act and the increased volume of new applications, are dealt with as quickly as possible and waiting times for those applying for international protection are reduced to the greatest possible extent.

It is recognised that currently many applicants for international protection are waiting longer than they should for their first instance interviews in the IPO and to have their cases decided. While the structural causes of delays have been removed with the commencement of the International Protection Act, 2015, the main challenge now faced is the need to quickly eradicate the substantial number of cases carried over from the previous system. As I indicated, these challenges are being addressed by deploying increased resources and a continual assessment and reform of the use of those resources and, having due regard to the requirements of the International Protection Act 2015.

Question No. 532 answered with Question No. 514.

Garda Data

533. Deputy John Lahart asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of members of An Garda Síochána that have been injured in the line of duty; the number of injuries and types of injuries in each of the years 2016, 2017 and to date in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25461/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will appreciate, the Garda Commissioner is responsible for carrying on and managing and controlling generally the administration and business of An Garda Síochána and I, as Minister have no direct role in the matter.

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

An Garda Síochána has both an Occupational Health Service and an Employee Assistance Service.

The Garda Occupational Health Service (GOHS) is staffed by a team of specialist occupational healthcare professionals supported by an administration team. The Service is dedicated to supporting the employees of An Garda Síochána to maintain their health and well-being in order to carry out their duties safely and effectively.

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

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

For the Deputy's information I have set out in the following table, as advised by the Commissioner, the specific information requested in relation to the number of members of An Garda Síochána that have been injured in the line of duty from 2016 to 2018 as of 07 June 2018.

Number of Gardaí injured and cause of injury 2016- 2018 (as of 07/06/18)

YEAR	Assault	Body movement (Resulting in injury)	Contact with something sharp, pointed or rough	Injured by animal	Manual Handling	Needle Stick Injury/Stab/Blood or body fluid exposure
2016	281	21	35	12	43	43
2017	254	20	57	8	36	53
2018	71	14	16	7	8	8
Grand Total	606	55	108	27	87	104

YEAR	Other	Psychological shock or trauma	Road Traffic Collision	Slips/ Trips/ Falls	Smoke inhalation	Grand Total
2016	13	4	103	109		664

YEAR	Other	Psycholog-ical shock or trauma	Road Traf-fic Colli-sion	Slips/ Trips/ Falls	Smoke inhalation	Grand Total
2017	12	3	85	111	1	640
2018	6	2	37	33		202
Grand Total	31	9	225	253	1	1506

Garda Transport Provision

534. Deputy John Lahart asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the measures taken to equip gardai in Tallaght with adequate four wheel drive vehicles to help reduce response times should a similar situation arise (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25462/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): 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. In total, in the period 2013 to 2017, almost €44 million has been invested in the fleet.

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

I am informed by the Garda authorities that as of 31 March 2018, a total of 102 4x4 vehicles are available to An Garda Síochána.

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

Finally, I am informed by the Garda authorities that there are no plans to purchase further 4x4 vehicles in 2018.

Garda Accommodation

535. Deputy John Lahart asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if his attention has been drawn to the fact that a number of gardai in the Tallaght area operate out of a hotel close to Tallaght Garda station due to a lack of space; his plans to provide funds for the redevelopment and expansion of Tallaght Garda station; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25463/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Deputy will appreciate that the Garda Commissioner is primarily responsible for the effective and efficient use of the resources available to An Garda Síochána, including responsibility for the formulation of proposals in relation to the opening and closing of Garda stations. In addition, the programme of replacement and refurbishment of Garda accommodation is progressed by the Garda authorities working in close cooperation with the Office of Public Works (OPW), which has responsibility for the provision and maintenance of Garda accommodation. This includes identifying

and progressing any necessary remedial or refurbishment works required at individual stations. As Minister, I have no direct role in these matters.

As the Deputy will be aware, the Garda Síochána Building and Refurbishment Programme 2016 – 2021, which is an ambitious 5 year building Programme reflecting the priorities of An Garda Síochána, will benefit some 30 locations throughout the State. I am informed by the Garda authorities that the Programme does not include the provision of a new Garda station in Tallaght, and I further understand from the Garda authorities that there are no plans to undertake a major refurbishment of this Garda station.

However, I am informed by Garda authorities that the Programme does include the provision of a Property and Exhibit Store (PEMS) at Tallaght Garda Station and that the development of this property storage facility is ongoing in conjunction with the OPW.

I am further informed by the Garda authorities that to assist with accommodation in the existing Garda station in Tallaght, the OPW has provided additional accommodation for An Garda Síochána in the close proximity to the station, at the Plaza Office Complex, Tallaght. I understand that An Garda Síochána took up occupation of this accommodation in October 2009.

Residency Permits

536. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the correct procedure to be followed in the case of a person (details supplied); if they are required to take particular steps in respect of their residency status to meet full requirements; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25504/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that from the very limited information the Deputy has provided it is not possible to address the issues raised in his question.

In this regard the person concerned should be advised to write to Unit 2, Residence Division, Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service, 13-14 Burgh Quay, Dublin 2 in order to allow for a full examination of their circumstances.

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 Data

537. Deputy Jim O'Callaghan asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of outstanding warrants nationwide on the Garda PULSE system to date by bench, penal and committal warrants; the year in which the number of those outstanding were issued, in tabular form; the number of outstanding warrants by type in each Garda division; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25505/18]

538. Deputy Jim O'Callaghan asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of warrants issued in the past 12 months that were executed; the number that were executed within three, six or 12 months, respectively; the number of the remainder that are outstanding; and if

he will make a statement on the matter. [25506/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 537 and 538 together.

I have requested this information from the Garda authorities and I will contact the Deputy directly when the report is to hand.

Court Procedures

539. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if his attention has been drawn to the concept of courtroom dogs which are used in the United States of America as a means of assisting and comforting vulnerable witnesses who are required to give evidence; his plans to pilot a similar scheme here; if not, if piloting such a scheme will be considered; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25511/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I have recently been advised by the Victims Rights Alliance organisation that it is engaging with the Court House Dogs Foundation in the United States and also with some European colleagues working on behalf of victims to explore the possibility of securing funding from the European Commission to develop a pilot project on the use of courthouse facility dogs to support child victims of crime in the European Union. The Alliance has further advised officials from my Department that it intends to establish a working group to explore this project further and that, at that point, it would seek representation on the group from representatives from the criminal justice sector as required.

Question No. 540 answered with Question No. 450.

Closed-Circuit Television Systems

541. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if legislation or a statutory instrument will be introduced that would allow An Garda Síochána and specifically the district superintendent act as data controller for community CCTV if it has been approved for use by the JPC and An Garda Síochána; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25548/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Deputy will be aware that CCTV systems installed for the purposes of crime prevention and as aids to policing in areas to which the general public routinely have access, such as town centres, fall into two distinct but complementary categories, namely Garda CCTV systems and community-based CCTV systems. Neither type of CCTV system may be established without authorisation by the Garda Commissioner under section 38 of the Garda Síochána Act 2005, among other requirements.

Garda CCTV systems are planned and implemented on the basis of An Garda Síochána's identified operational needs and priorities. Accordingly, decisions in relation to the introduction or extension of such systems are a matter for the Garda Commissioner and I, as Minister, have no role in that regard.

Community CCTV is governed by section 38 of the Garda Síochána Act 2005 and the Garda Síochána (CCTV) Order 2006 (SI No 289 of 2006). This legal framework requires that any proposed community CCTV 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, and
- have the authorisation of the Garda Commissioner.

This is the legal basis for all community CCTV schemes, regardless of how they are funded.

There are no plans to amend the relevant legislation in the manner suggested in the Deputy's question.

In that regard, it can be noted that the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner has confirmed to my Department that it is not querying and does not have any current concerns regarding the legislative underpinning of community CCTV systems.

A grant-aid scheme was launched by my Department last year to assist groups in the establishment of community-based CCTV systems in their local areas. Full details of the grant aid package is all available to download from my Department's website - www.justice.ie. I invite interested groups, in both rural and urban areas, take advantage of the availability of this scheme and to contact the Department in the event with any queries in that regard.

Departmental Funding

542. Deputy Jonathan O'Brien asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his Department's capital allocation in each of the years 2019 to 2023; and the areas to which funds will be allocated in each of those years. [25575/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The capital allocation for the Justice Votes Group over the period 2019 to 2022, as published in the recent National Development Plan, is as follows (details for 2023 are yet to be finalised):

Year	Allocation€ million
2019	241
2020	230
2021	208
2022	216
Total	895

The precise breakdown of the budget across the votes and various projects will be dependent on the outcome of procurement competitions and the timing of expenditure but in broad terms the funding will mainly be allocated to the following areas:

- Construction of the new Forensic Science Laboratory;
- Garda Síochána Building and Refurbishment Programme including replacement of the Harcourt Street Complex;
- Garda ICT Programme including completion of the implementation of Schengen Information system;
- Continuing Investment in the Garda Fleet;
- Prisons, Courts and Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service ICT investment;

- Prison Building Programme including the redevelopment of Limerick Prison;
- New or refurbished courthouses in a number of regional cities and county towns.

Question No. 543 answered with Question No. 483.

Garda Transport Data

544. Deputy Thomas P. Broughan asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of large marked Garda vans; if funding will be made available to purchase additional large marked vans for use by the Garda public order units; if so, the amount; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25596/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will be aware, 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. This is in addition to the investment of almost €30 million in the period 2013 to 2015. In total, in the period 2013 to 2017, almost €44 million has been invested in the fleet.

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

I am informed by the Garda authorities that as of 8 June 2018 there are currently 14 vans available for public order units. I am further informed by the Garda authorities that an order has recently been placed for 15 large vans to be fitted out for public order units.

Detention Centres Provision

545. Deputy Thomas P. Broughan asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when construction works on the new Garda immigration detention facility at Dublin Airport will be completed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25597/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Deputy will appreciate that the programme of replacement and refurbishment of Garda accommodation is progressed by the Garda authorities working in close cooperation with the Office of Public Works (OPW), which has responsibility for the provision and maintenance of Garda accommodation. As Minister I have no direct role in the matter.

In relation to the facility at Dublin Airport, I am informed by the OPW that works commenced on site 8 May 2018, with completion expected by the end of 2018.

Garda Vetting

546. Deputy Jim O'Callaghan asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the waiting times for Garda vetting for voluntary organisations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25606/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will appreciate, the processing of vetting applications by the Garda National Vetting Bureau is an operational matter for the Garda Authorities and is carried out in accordance with the provisions

of the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012-2016 and other relevant law. My Department has no role in the processing of individual vetting applications.

I am informed by the Garda Authorities that the National Vetting Bureau works to ensure that the processing time for vetting applications is kept to the minimum necessary in order to ensure that the statutory obligation to receive a vetting disclosure prior to permitting any person to undertake relevant work or activities on behalf of an organisation can be facilitated without undue delay.

The current turnaround time for vetting applications submitted by organisations utilising the eVetting system is five working days for over 80% of vetting applications received.

In certain cases, it is necessary to conduct further enquiries within An Garda Síochána or with external agencies such as the Courts Service, Probation Service, Child and Family Agency, etc. These enquiries may be conducted for many reasons, such as verification of identity, updating of incomplete records or establishing the outcomes of investigations. In such instances processing times may be longer than the general average.

Across 2017 and the first quarter of 2018, the National Vetting Bureau placed an emphasis on supporting relevant organisations to meet statutory obligations with regard to retrospective vetting arrangements, the deadline for which was 30 April 2018. While this resulted in a short-term increase in the volume of vetting applications received in the first quarter of this year, which temporarily resulted in the turnaround time increasing in excess of the five-day timeline, additional resources were applied to address this additional demand enabling the National Vetting Bureau to return to the turnaround times within the five-day timeline.

Question No. 547 answered with Question No. 491.

Garda Transport Data

548. Deputy Seán Haughey asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of additional unmarked Garda vehicles that came into the fleet in each of the years 2016, 2017 and to date in 2018; the number of unmarked vehicles that were withdrawn during the same period; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25663/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): 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. This is in addition to the investment of almost €30 million in the period 2013 to 2015.

As the Deputy will appreciate, decisions in relation to the provision and allocation of Garda vehicles across the various Garda divisions 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 understand that Garda management keeps the distribution of resources under continual review in the context of crime trends and policing priorities, so as to ensure that the optimum use is made of these resources.

I am informed by the Garda authorities that the tables below outline the numbers of unmarked vehicles allocated to and removed from the Garda fleet over the periods requested by the Deputy.

Unmarked vehicles allocated to the Garda fleet

Year	Cars	Vans	Motor-cycles	4x4	Others	Total
2016	216	65	3	9	28	321
2017	148	25	2	7	18	200
2018 (to date)	58	0	0	0	6	64

Unmarked vehicles removed from the Garda fleet

Year	Cars	Vans	Motor-cycles	4x4	Others	Total
2016	167	21	4	6	9	207
2017	163	28	0	10	7	208
2018 (to date)	82	11	1	3	2	99

Garda Equipment

549. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to issue each front-line garda with a Taser; the estimated cost of same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25664/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Deputy will appreciate that although the Garda Commissioner is responsible for the deployment of equipment to members of An Garda Síochána, where the Commissioner proposes to arrange for deployment of less-lethal weapons, including conductive electrical devices (CEDs, commonly referred to as Tasers), Ministerial consent is required, due to the fact that An Garda Síochána is primarily an unarmed force.

In line with the recommendation in the Garda Síochána Inspectorate's 2007 report "Review of Practices and Procedures for Barricade Incidents", all members are issued with incapacitant spray (i.e. pepper spray) while other forms of less lethal weapons, including tasers and bean bag shots, are available to Garda specialist units.

I am informed by the Garda authorities that CEDs (tasers) are currently issued to members of the Emergency Response Unit and Armed Support Units, which are deployed regionally. Armed Support Units were established to provide an armed response capacity on a regional basis to support and supplement the national Emergency Response Unit. Members are highly trained and equipped with a variety of non-lethal and lethal weapons and perform high visibility armed checkpoints and patrols throughout their respective regions.

Ministerial consent has not to date been sought for roll-out of CEDs outside the specialist units. In the circumstances, an estimated cost for the provision of CEDs more generally to members of An Garda Síochána is not currently available.

Garda Recruitment

550. **Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the estimated full-year cost of employing ten new front-line gardaí. [25698/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Deputy will be aware that 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 by arranging for the recruitment and training of the members of An Garda Síochána. I, as Minister, have no direct role in the matter.

I have been informed by the Garda authorities that payroll costs for new Garda recruits include a basic allowance of €184 per week. After 32 weeks of training, Garda Recruits are attested and move on to the first point of the Garda pay scale €29,669 rising to a maximum of €51,693 per annum after 19 years. They may also qualify for other allowances depending on their assignments.

I understand that the annual payroll cost of 10 new recruits in their first year including that training period (assuming a commencement date of 1st January each year) is approximately €229,400. This figure includes Employer's PRSI and an estimation of allowances which the recruits may qualify for following attestation. This does not include the impact of any scheduled pay increases. The annual cost will increase as the members move up the Garda pay scale each year.

Garda Recruitment

551. Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the estimated full-year cost of employing ten new administration staff located within An Garda Síochána. [25699/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy is aware, civilian staff are employed within An Garda Síochána at a range of different grades and the Deputy will appreciate that the cost of recruitment is dependent on the mix of grades involved.

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

Question No. 552 answered with Question No. 460.

Garda Resources

553. Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the estimated full-year cost of providing front-line Garda vehicles with GPS. [25701/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will appreciate, it is the Garda Commissioner who is responsible for provision and allocation of Garda resources including equipment and, as Minister, I have no direct role in relation to these matters.

I am informed by the Garda authorities that GPS does not form part of the specified requirements for technical fit-out of all Garda vehicles. In the absence of a tendering process, it is currently not possible to provide an estimated cost for such a project.

Nonetheless, it is understood that a significant number of Garda vehicles operating nationwide are fitted with TETRA radios and the majority of those vehicles therefore have a GPS facility.

I am further informed that the standard issue TETRA radio hand-held devices issued to

members include a GPS facility. The secure TETRA digital radio system allows any relevant details (including for example incident details, location directions if required and any other relevant operational information) to be provided by the relevant Garda Control Room to Garda members as required.

Garda Youth Diversion Projects

554. Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the estimated cost of establishing a new Garda youth diversion project; and the estimated full year running cost of any such a project. [25702/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton): The full year running costs of a Garda Youth Diversion Project will vary between projects and is dependent on several factors including location, catchment area and the number of participants. The most recently established GYDPs which were set up in 2015, were allocated a maximum annual budget of €125,000 each. This included any costs that may be associated with the establishment of the project.

In 2017, my Department provided €13,290,518 in grant funding which covered the full year costs of 105 Garda Youth Diversion Projects operating nationwide. A further €1,372,178 in grant funding was provided to support a range of other activities, including project work relating to Local Drugs Task Forces, pilot mentoring initiatives and measures to support training and best practices.

Legal Aid

555. Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the estimated full-year cost of reducing free civil legal aid by €70, €80, €90 and €100 respectively in tabular form. [25703/18]

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 Board has supplied the financial analysis below, which is for general information purposes only, and is subject to a number of assumptions including level of demand and case profile.

It should be noted that civil legal aid is not free in the vast majority of cases. The contribution for which a person is liable will depend on their disposable income and capital assets. Persons who receive civil legal services are generally obliged to pay a financial contribution of €30 for legal advice and a further minimum contribution of €130 if they require representation in court. The Board has a discretionary facility to waive contributions in instances of undue hardship and certain circumstances for example, defence of District Court child care proceedings.

Using the contributions figure collected in 2017 (provisional figure €1,647,517) as a base line, the table below sets out what the Board's estimated income in contributions would be if the legal aid contribution was reduced by the specified figures and the consequent loss of income that would accrue to the Board.

For the purposes of answering the Deputy's query, where the reduction referred to is greater than the contribution currently being collected, it has been reduced to zero. For example, a contribution of €79 is, for the purposes of applying an €80, €90, and €100 reduction, reduced

by €79 to €0 in all instances.

	If Aid Contribution were Reduced by €70	If Aid Contribution were Reduced by €80	If Aid Contribution were Reduced by €90	If Aid Contribution were Reduced by €100
Amount which would have been collected in 2017	€1,067,236	€992,588	€918,887	€845,459
Difference from amount actually collected in 2017	-€580,281	-€654,929	-€728,630	-€802,058

Courts Service

556. Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the estimated full-year running cost of the Courts Service. [25704/18]

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 the net running cost of the Courts Service for 2018 is €83.606m as published in the 2018 Estimate Volume.

This comprises total gross funding for pay, non-pay and capital of €131.575m. However, the Courts Service has Appropriations in Aid (Receipts) amounting to €47.969m primarily relating to Court Fees and these receipts are used to defray the cost of running the Courts Service.

Garda Resources

557. Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of forensic accountants dedicated to tackling white-collar crime. [25707/18]

558. Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the estimated full-year cost of employing five forensic accountants. [25708/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 557 and 558 together.

The information requested by the Deputy cannot be provided in the time available. I have requested the information sought from the Garda Commissioner and I will write to the Deputy on receipt of same.

Electronic Tagging

559. Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the estimated full-year cost of electronic tagging and monitoring thereafter of those convicted of rape,

child sexual abuse and similar violent offences that are resident here. [25709/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): Electronic tagging is a complex area and there is a significant body of work being undertaken to evaluate the type of technology and resources required in order to implement and sustain a viable electronic monitoring system in Ireland.

Under the Sex Offenders Act 2001, a convicted sex offender can have certain conditions put in place as part of their post-release supervision. The General Scheme of the Sex Offenders (Amendment) Bill, which was approved by the Government last week, provides for the use of electronic monitoring to ensure that conditions are not breached. The Bill will now been sent to the OPC for drafting and is being referred to the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Justice and Equality for pre-legislative scrutiny.

Upon enactment, effect will be given to those electronic monitoring provisions through a procurement process, and it is not possible at this remove to estimate the costs. I should mention for completeness that options for the procurement of an electronic monitoring service for persons on bail are currently under examination.

Work Permits Applications

560. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the status of a work permit application by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [24515/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The Employment Permits Sections of my Department inform me that an application for a General Employment Permit for the person concerned was received on 14th April 2018.

A decision was made to refuse the granting of the application on 11th June, 2018, and the applicant has been notified of this decision in writing and of their right to request a review of this decision in line with the provisions of the Employment Permits Acts within 28 days.

This application was refused on the basis that some essential documentation required for the application process was not provided by the applicant and the level of remuneration on offer is less than the minimum amount specified in the Employment Permits Regulations 2017.

A refusal to grant an employment permit does not preclude an applicant from submitting another application for an employment permit. Such an application should comply with all of the legislative requirements pertaining to the particular employment permit type.

IDA Ireland Site Visits

561. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of site visits conducted by the IDA in each of the years 2016 and 2017 and to date in 2018, by county in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [24256/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): IDA Ireland continues to highlight the benefits of expanding or locating in all counties of Ireland to its client base. It is important to remember, however, that the final decision as to where to invest always rests with the company concerned. It is also the case that site visit activity does

not necessarily reflect investment potential, as at least 70% of all new foreign direct investment comes from existing IDA Ireland client companies.

The following table sets out details on the number of site visits by IDA clients to each county from 2016 until Q1 2018.

County	2016	2017	Q1 2018
Dublin	284	327	69
Kildare	8	10	4
Meath	8	3	1
Wicklow	5	2	0
Laois	6	4	4
Longford	6	7	0
Offaly	4	5	0
Westmeath	36	42	3
Clare	18	22	4
Limerick	49	42	8
Tipperary	8	8	1
Cavan	2	2	0
Louth	24	22	6
Monaghan	2	1	0
Donegal	7	2	0
Leitrim	8	5	2
Sligo	20	18	5
Carlow	9	8	1
Kilkenny	10	6	0
Waterford	17	11	5
Wexford	7	3	0
Cork	49	51	10
Kerry	3	9	0
Galway	42	62	10
Mayo	5	7	2
Roscommon	1	3	0
Total	638	682	135

Third Level Funding

562. Deputy Billy Kelleher asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the amount of current and capital expenditure allocated to the programme for research in third level institutions in 2018. [24356/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy John Halligan): The 2018 allocation to the Programme for Research in Third Level Institutions (PRTLI) is €14.3m. This is a Capital allocation in the Department's Vote - there is no Current allocation under the PRTLI Subhead.

Trade Agreements

563. Deputy Charlie McConalogue asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the likely ratification procedure at EU and member state level for ratification of a final Mercosur trade agreement relating to market access, quotas and the elements that fall under exclusive EU-level competence and areas that require national-level approval; if she or her Government colleagues have carried out assessments to date on the scenario; if the Attorney General was consulted in this regard; and if Dáil Éireann will have to ratify elements of a final Mercosur agreement, including the provisional application of the agreement. [24547/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The Common Commercial Policy is an exclusive competence of the European Union under the Treaty of the Functioning of the European Union. The Lisbon Treaty extended this competence to cover foreign direct investment, as well as making the European Parliament a co-legislator alongside the Council on trade matters. The European Commission acts as lead negotiator on behalf of all EU countries regarding trade agreements with non-EU countries. Member States (in Council) approve negotiating directives (or mandates) before negotiations begin, are kept informed of developments as the negotiations proceed and have final approval at Council.

The EU is currently negotiating a trade agreement with the four founding members of Mercosur (Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay). If concluded an EU-Mercosur Free Trade Agreement would be the EU's largest trade deal to date, four times the size of the trade agreement with Japan.

As with any Free Trade Agreement negotiations, Ireland, like all Member States, has defensive as well as offensive trade interests. We are mindful of the cumulative impact of EU FTAs on specific sectors like agriculture and the challenges they face. Officials from my Department continue to be engaged, through the Trade Policy Committee, in highlighting the importance of maintaining the balance between the EU's defensive and offensive interests. Equally, when the Commission has reported on progress in these negotiations to Trade Ministers in Council, I have set out Ireland's key interests. Furthermore insofar as our defensive interests in agriculture are concerned, both An Taoiseach and the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine have also engaged with their counterparts.

The Commission may present some EU trade agreements as 'EU-only' meaning that all the policy areas they cover fall under the sole responsibility of the EU institutions. Other agreements may be presented as 'mixed' where they have areas of shared responsibility between the EU and Member States. Only at the conclusion of negotiations and when the Commission presents an Agreement to Council can an agreement be determined definitely as being 'EU-only' or 'mixed'. Were a deal to be concluded between the EU and Mercosur in 2018, the relevant text would proceed to so-called "legal scrubbing", and translation, a process which can take up to two years to complete. The ratification process regarding individual trade agreements must be taken on a case-by-case basis depending on the issues comprehended in the final agreement. Where appropriate, my Department seeks legal advice on the appropriate ratification process to follow in each case.

Mixed agreements enter into force only once each individual EU Member State has approved it in line with its own National procedures. As this process may take several years, the Council can decide to provisionally apply an agreement ('provisional application'). Provisional Application generally applies to those parts of the agreement over which the EU has exclusive competence. The extent of EU only competence was addressed comprehensively in the 2017 Opinion of the Court of Justice of the European Union in the EU-Singapore FTA case. Provisional Application requires the agreement by Council and ratification by the European

Parliament.

As regards the more general issue of the benefits and opportunities arising from Free Trade Agreements, my Department is currently in the process of undertaking a comprehensive study which will examine in depth the economic impact and opportunities of existing and forthcoming EU Free Trade Agreements, including with Mercosur. The analysis from the study will inform the Department and relevant agencies in setting the policy framework required for Irish businesses to take full advantage of concluded trade agreements and preferential trade access, and to prepare for future opportunities; including Mercosur.

Programme for Government Implementation

564. Deputy Micheál Martin asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the status of the implementation of the programme for partnership Government as it applies to her Department; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [24570/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): A key objective of the Programme for Partnership Government, from the perspective of my Department, is to provide a supportive environment for enterprise and employment and to deliver sustainable full employment. In the Programme, my Department was tasked with supporting a leap forward in the capacity and performance of our enterprise sector and delivering an environment that is conducive to the creation and maintenance of quality employment. We have set a target of 200,000 extra jobs by 2020, with 135,000 of these to be in locations outside Dublin. The latest statistics show that employment continues to grow strongly:

- 97,500 jobs were created between Q2 2016 and Q4 2017, bringing total employment to 2,225,100.
- Full time employment increased by 7.8% (from 1,632,900 to 1,761,800) from Q2 2016 to Q4 2017.
- Unemployment decreased nationally from 204,900 in Q2 2016 to 151,500 in Q4 2017, with the monthly unemployment rate now at 5.8% in May 2018.

With regard to regional employment, the statistics are encouraging:

- From Q2 2016 to Q2 2017, employment outside of Dublin grew by 3.0% compared to a growth of 1.3% in Dublin.
- Employment increased in all eight regions over the twelve month period to Q2 2017.
- The unemployment rate decreased in all regions from Q2 2016 – Q2 2017.
- Labour Force Survey data shows that 84% of the increase in employment in the year to Q2 2017 was outside Dublin.

IDA Ireland continues to work to attract foreign direct investment to Ireland. The agency created 10,684 net new jobs over the course of 2017, with every region in Ireland posting net gains in jobs. At the end of 2017 there were 210,443 people working in IDA Ireland client companies, the highest in IDA Ireland's history. This figure surpasses the five-year target of 209,000 which was set in 2015 in the "Winning: Foreign Direct Investment" strategy. The IDA is continuing to work towards other objectives set out in this strategy, especially that of increasing the level of investment by between 30% and 40% in each region outside Dublin by 2019. Strong progress was made in this respect in 2017, with 45% of IDA Ireland supported

jobs created located outside Dublin. Through its Regional Property Programme, the IDA is also developing appropriate property solutions in designated regional locations to attract overseas investment.

In the indigenous sector, 2017 was a very strong year for job creation among Enterprise Ireland clients with 19,332 new jobs created. 2017 resulted in the highest client employment in the history of the agency, highest net job creation in the history of the agency and the lowest number of job losses since 1998. There was positive net jobs growth in every county across the country, with 65% of new job creation outside of Dublin. Employment in Local Enterprise Office client companies now stands at 37,485 with 3,760 net new jobs were created in 2017.

My Department is focused on addressing the challenges that Brexit poses for business, and we established a dedicated Brexit Unit in 2016 to lead on the coordination of the Department's policy and operational responses to Brexit, including our approach to the negotiations within the EU and bilateral relations with the UK. In November 2017, we published "Building Stronger Business: Responding to Brexit by competing, innovating and trading". This paper summarises impacts of Brexit across key policy areas within the Department and outlines the policy and operational measures underway and planned by the Department and its Agencies to respond to Brexit, including supports available to companies to help them prepare for Brexit. The recently launched Agile Innovation Fund, launched in 2017, helps companies use innovation to mitigate risks posed by Brexit. Companies are already seeing that such initiatives increase business resilience and add value, whatever the full impacts of Brexit may be. We also provide regular input and advice to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade on key issues for Ireland in the context of the negotiations including exit issues, transition, arrangements for framework for the future relationship.

In relation to Trade, according to CSO merchandise trade and balance of payments data, total exports have increased by 58 percent since 2012 to €283.7 billion in 2017. The Government's Trade Strategy, 'Ireland Connected: Trading and Investing in a Dynamic World', supports an extensive programme of Ministerial-led trade missions, as part of a major drive towards market diversification as well as ambitious targets for trade and investment. These include increasing our indigenous exports to reach €26 billion by 2020 – up by 26% from 2015, generating 30,000 more jobs in tourism by 2020 and €5 billion in overseas tourism revenues by 2025, and securing 900 new foreign direct investments in the period 2015-2019. In relation to Brexit, the target is to intensify and diversify 80% of indigenous export growth to 2020 to be outside of the UK market and maintain exports of at least €7.5 billion to the UK.

In 2017, Enterprise Ireland launched its Eurozone Strategy as a key element of its supports to help companies diversify their export markets. In particular, it aims to increase exports to the Eurozone by €2bn per annum by 2020, equivalent to 50 percent increase. This would represent one of the most significant shifts in Enterprise Ireland supported client exports into the Eurozone and is particularly important in the context of Brexit. More recently, Government's Enterprise 2025 Renewed strategy published in March 2018 sets out targets for export growth and diversification within the indigenous exporting base, with ambitions to increase exports as a percentage of total sales of Irish owned companies from 52 percent to between 55 and 60 percent by 2020 and increase Enterprise Ireland client exports beyond UK markets from €14.1 billion to €17.4 billion by 2020.

The Programme for Partnership Government commits to alleviating pressures on household budgets and, in this context, the work of the Personal Injuries Commission, established in January 2017, will play an important role in helping to address the cost of motor insurance in Ireland, complementing the work of the Cost of Insurance Working Group. The first report of the Commission was published in December 2017 and work is progressing on the Commission's

final report, which will focus predominately on benchmarking of Irish motor insurance personal injury awards with those in other jurisdictions.

My Department is also focusing on the introduction of a number of additional supports for business. A Taking Care of Business event was held in Dublin Castle in November 2017 at which nearly 500 members of the business community – including SMEs, start-ups, entrepreneurs and business students – engaged face to face with 30 state agencies, offices and services to learn about the broad range of advice and support that are available for their business. A number of representative bodies from industry also came together to support the event. A further regional event is planned for 25th September in the Mid-West. A new Employment Permits Online System was launched in September 2016, achieving a 95% take-up rate in the first two weeks. This high rate of take-up has continued since then. Under the new system, the application to decision time can take as little as 5-7 working days to complete, an excellent timeframe by international comparison.

In April, my Department published its Statement of Strategy for the 2018-2021 period and this outlines the many areas where my Department will maintain focus over that timeframe to deliver on our commitments under the Programme for Partnership Government.

Education Policy

565. Deputy Patrick O'Donovan asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation if options for the promotion of second level schools for international students through Enterprise Ireland will be examined; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25139/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): My colleague Richard Bruton TD, Minister for Education, has policy responsibility for the International Education Strategy for Ireland, 2016 - 2020. As part of that Strategy, Enterprise Ireland, which is an agency under my remit, is tasked with the promotion and marketing of international education.

I understand that the Department of Education and Skills does not have a policy to promote second level schools for international students.

Commencement of Legislation

566. Deputy Mattie McGrath asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the sections and parts of all legislation brought forward by her Department in each of the past four years that have yet to be commenced; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25171/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Details of sections or parts of my Department's legislation from the last four years that have not been commenced are set out below.

Questions - Written Answers

Act/Section of Act that has not been Commenced	Reason Commencement Order has not been made
Companies Act 2014 Section 4(2) Section 1325	<p>Section 4(2) in so far as it relates to Regulation 6 of the European Communities (Mergers and Divisions of Companies) (Amendment)Regulations 2011 (S.I. No.306 of 2011). The full repeal of Regulation 6 of the European Communities (Mergers and Divisions of Companies) (Amendment) Regulations 2011 was not possible due to a difference in national law requirements on mergers concerning notice requirements and those provided for in the EU regulations on cross-border mergers. The reason this section has not commenced is because it would repeal the foundation documents of the Bank of Ireland. The section will only be commenced once Bank of Ireland decides to convert to a company incorporated under the Companies Act 2014.</p>
Sections 65 to 70 of the Workplace Relations Act, 2015	<p>The Workplace Relations Commission was established on the 1st October 2015 under the Workplace Relations Act, 2015 and saw the merging of the activities of the National Employment Rights Authority, the Labour Relations Commission, the Equality Tribunal and the first instance functions of the Labour Court and the Employment Appeals Tribunal into a new Body of First Instance - the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC). The appellate functions of the Employment Appeals Tribunal were incorporated into an expanded Labour Court. Sections 65 to 70 inclusive of the Workplace Relations Act, 2015 relate to the dissolution of the Employment Appeals Tribunal (EAT) and cannot be commenced until the legacy caseload of the EAT has been finalised. The legacy caseload relates to cases submitted prior to the commencement of the Act on 1 October 2015 and has decreased to the point that there are currently less than 100 cases on hands.</p>

Act/Section of Act that has not been Commenced	Reason Commencement Order has not been made
Subsections (5)(b) and (6) of section 15 of the Employment Permits (Amendment) Act 2014	Commencement of these provisions will be subject to the outcome of pending consultations. The provisions provide for a portion of the employment permit fee to be refunded to a person nominated by the applicant where the application is withdrawn or refused. Currently, fees are refunded to the applicant only. These provisions may commence when the necessary changes are made to the employment permits processing system to support such a policy change, subject to further consultations. The employment permit processing system has not yet been adapted to support the refund of fees to a person other than applicant. If it is considered necessary to do so, consultation will need to take place with the relevant bodies as regards other legislation and any unintended impact of this provision, e.g. The Criminal Justice (Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing) Act 2010, as amended, etc.

Work Permits Eligibility

567. Deputy Kevin O'Keeffe asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation if she will consider amending a specific category under the employment permit regulations to address shortages in an area which is reaching a critical point with increasing demand for the job skill (details supplied). [25202/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): At my request, my Department is currently chairing an Interdepartmental Group to review the economic migration policies underpinning the current employment permits system, the purpose of which is to ensure that our current policies are fully supportive of Ireland's emerging labour market needs, be they skills or labour shortages in certain sectors. A full report on the review is due by end June, with recommendations on a framework for the future operation of the employment permits regime. Following on from that Report, it is expected that a review of the lists of occupations for employment permits will be conducted in the second half of this year. The Deputy will appreciate that retention issues in the State's labour market should not be addressed through the deployment of the employment permits system. Healthcare Assistants are currently included on the ineligible list of employments. In order to remove an occupation from this list, there would need to be a clear demonstration that recruitment difficulties are solely due to shortages and not to other factors such as salary and/or working conditions. Organisations in the relevant sector would need to provide the necessary data to substantiate their claims. A detailed business case for removal of Healthcare Assistants from the ineligible list, based on this detailed data, would then need to be put forward by the Department of Health, as the lead Department for the sector, to my Department. I am aware that my colleague, Minister of State Daly, with special responsibility for Older People, has had various meetings with the nursing

home sector and this matter has been discussed. To date, such detailed evidence has yet to be provided by the sector to his Department. However, I understand Minister Daly is willing to work with the industry on this important issue to ensure continuity of service in the best interests of residents.

EU Directives

568. Deputy Maurice Quinlivan asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the reason for the delay in the transposition of the trade secrets directive, EU Directive 2016/943; if Dáil Éireann will have an opportunity to debate it; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25501/18]

569. Deputy Maurice Quinlivan asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation if her attention has been drawn to the serious concerns surrounding the impact the trade secrets directive may have on whistleblower protections here; the way in which she plans to address the matter; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25503/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy John Halligan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 568 and 569 together.

EU Directive 2016/943 on the protection of undisclosed know-how and business information (trade secrets) against their unlawful acquisition, use and disclosure has been transposed by way of S.I.188 of 2018 and my Department will lay these Regulations before both Houses of the Oireachtas. The Regulations, made under the 1972 European Communities Act, provide for civil redress measures and remedies in the event a trade secret is unlawfully acquired, used or disclosed. The confidentiality of the trade secret during court proceedings is ensured by limiting access to the hearing and court documents containing the trade secret.

During the course of my Department's public consultation on the transposition of the Directive, the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform informed my Department it had obtained legal advice to the effect the Directive imposes a requirement of a subjective public interest test and that the transposing legislation should amend the Protected Disclosures Act 2014 by adding a requirement that "protected disclosure" which came within Article 5 (b) of the Directive must be made for the purpose of protecting the public interest. Legal advice obtained by my Department supported this view and accordingly the S.I. contains such an amendment so that Ireland achieves a full transposition of the Directive.

International Bodies Membership

570. Deputy Maurice Quinlivan asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation if negotiations have taken place in regard to Ireland becoming a member of CERN; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25551/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy John Halligan): Innovation 2020, the national strategy for research and innovation, recognises that in order for Ireland to become a Global Innovation Leader, our research and innovation system must be open with strong international collaboration links. Membership of leading International Research Organisations is an important mechanism for facilitating this engagement. For this reason, the Government gave a specific commitment in Innovation 2020 to initiate negotiations with CERN on Ireland's membership options.

Discussions with CERN commenced in 2016 and senior officials from my department, Enterprise Ireland and Science Foundation Ireland visited CERN in Geneva in July 2016. The Director-General of CERN, Dr Fabiola Gianotti, visited Dublin in October 2016 and met with the former Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, Mary Mitchell O'Connor T.D. The information gathered during these engagements has provided my officials with a comprehensive understanding of the potential benefits of membership of CERN. While these benefits are significant, the cost of membership is also significant. Therefore, the case for membership of CERN must be assessed in the context of other investment priorities.

Regrettably, in view of the intense demands on the capital programme and the tight fiscal constraints it will not be possible to progress membership of CERN in 2018.

Ireland will be joining the European Southern Observatory (ESO) in October 2018, with a capital allocation obtained specifically to ensure Ireland's membership. This will cost €0.75 million in 2018 and increase to approximately €3.5 million in 2019. We will keep the issue of CERN membership under review and it is my hope that we may be in a position to progress CERN membership in the future, when the fiscal situation permits.

Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement

571. Deputy Maurice Quinlivan asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation when the EU–Canada Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement will come before Dáil Éireann for a debate and vote; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25552/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The EU–Canada Comprehensive Economic Trade Agreement (CETA) entered into force provisionally from the 21st September 2017. Provisional application is a standard part of EU trade agreements and allows only those parts of the agreement for which the EU has competence to be provisionally applied, pending the completion of each Member State's procedures according to the requirements of their national law.

Irish companies may now take advantage of important provisions in the Agreement including the immediate elimination of 98% of tariffs on almost all key exports, access to the Canadian procurement market, the easing of regulatory barriers and more transparent rules for market access.

It is important to note that the provisions relating to investment protection and the Investment Court System are excluded from provisional application. This means Ireland or other Member States will not be bound by these provisions until they are ratified by all Member States in accordance with their national law.

In this regard, given the request by Belgium for an Opinion (1/17) from the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) on the compatibility of the Investment Court System in CETA with the European Treaties, I have no immediate plans to seek the ratification of the Agreement. It would only be appropriate to do so after we have considered the Opinion of the CJEU. I understand that the CJEU has proposed to fix a hearing in this case, the expected date will be 26th June 2018. It is also important to see the benefits of CETA come into being, before it is put before the Dáil for ratification so there is a fully informed debate based on facts and evidence.

Ireland already has a strong trading relationship with Canada which is reflected in the €3.4 billion worth of annual trade between both countries. The value of Irish exports to Canada is worth €2.5 billion whilst the value of Irish imports from Canada is worth €868 million. I welcome the provisional application of CETA which will provide increased opportunities for new

and existing Irish companies trading with Canada to build and develop further these relationships, providing increased growth and jobs.

With a small domestic market, further expansion in other markets is essential to our continued economic growth. Promoting diversified export markets such as Canada in light of the potential impacts of Brexit is a key priority for the Department, as reflected in our Ireland Connected Trade Strategy and Enterprise 2025 revised.

Departmental Funding

572. Deputy Jonathan O'Brien asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation her Department's capital allocation in each of the years 2019 to 2023; and the areas to which funds will be allocated in each of those years. [25564/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): My ambition is to secure Ireland's position as the best place to succeed in business, delivering sustainable employment and high standards of living for all. The Deputy will be aware that the recently published National Development Plan (NDP) sets out a high-level financial and budgetary framework, which includes indicative Exchequer allocations, for each Ministerial Vote Group, over a five-year period from 2018 to 2022. The indicative allocations for my Department are set out in the following table:

2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
€555m	€620m	€630m	€640m	€715m

The precise budgetary Ministerial capital ceilings for the years 2019 to 2022 and beyond will be determined as part of the relevant annual Estimates processes. It is not possible at this time to provide the Deputy with the capital funding allocations for the years requested. As regards the 2019 estimates process, it is expected that finalisation and publication of the 2019 REV allocations will be determined in early December 2019. Notwithstanding the foregoing, the Deputy will be aware that the NDP, which is a ten-year plan out to 2027, also set out the investment priorities necessary to achieve the National Strategic Outcome 5: A Strong Economy, supported by Enterprise, Innovation and Skills. I and my Department are working to accelerate implementation of the key initiatives for which I have lead responsibility including:

- In early April I launched the second phase of the €60m Regional Enterprise Development Fund. This is part of a rolling programme of competitive calls over the coming years, and builds on the €31m of awards I announced in December 2017;
- I will announce the first call for proposals under the Disruptive Technologies Innovation Fund in the coming weeks;
- My Department is currently completing a review of the Seed and Venture Capital Scheme 2013-2018 and I will then bring forward proposals for a further scheme in 2019;
- IDA Ireland is continuing to invest in property solutions to attract investments into the regions;
- The number of world class Science Foundation Ireland Research Centres will increase further this year with the establishment of the Future Milk Centre;
- Additional funding is being provided in 2018 and beyond to increase the number of PhD qualified researchers from higher education sector;

- With the aid of funding from my Department and the Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine and support of the SBCI and EIB, I, along with Ministers Creed and Donohoe announced a new €300 million Brexit working capital loan fund for businesses with less than 500 employees at the end of March. My Department is also working with colleagues in the Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine, SBCI and EIB on developing a long-term loan scheme for businesses affected by Brexit.

While the NDP is at a very early stage of its existence, I am determined to maximise the potential impacts of the funding being provided to my Department in the first five years of the Plan as set out above so as to ensure sustainable growth and quality employment for all.

Economic Data

573. Deputy John Lahart asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the impact on industry here as a result of the US announcement on duties imposed on steel and aluminium and specifically on a company (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25586/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): On 31 May 2018, the US announced that it will impose tariffs on steel (25%) and aluminium (10%) imports from the European Union to the US from the 1st June 2018. This followed the expiry of temporary exemptions granted to the EU in respect of the original Presidential Proclamations imposing these tariffs from the 23rd March 2018. The measures were introduced following an investigation by the US Department of Commerce into the effect of those industries on US national security. Ireland is deeply disappointed by the US decision to end the temporary exemption tariffs on steel and aluminium which had been granted to EU.

The EU is of the view that these tariffs are unjustified and in conflict with WTO rules. Over the past number of months, the EU, Ireland and other Member States have engaged with the US at all possible levels and with other partners to find a solution to the problem of overcapacity in the steel sector. These were issues I raised with Commerce Secretary Ross during my recent visit to Washington in May. I regret that these efforts, by the EU Trade Commissioner, Ireland and other Member States have not resulted in the EU being provided with a permanent exemption from US tariffs. The EU has continually indicated its openness to discuss ways to improve bilateral trade relations but has been clear that any talks must be preceded by a permanent exemption.

Ireland fully supports the EU Commission in its determination to fully protect the EU's commercial interests from US steel and aluminium tariffs, in a WTO compatible manner. This includes the launching of proceedings against the US at the WTO, the imposition of rebalancing tariff measures (i.e. withdrawing tariff concessions on a number of imports from the US) and the possible imposition of safeguard measures (import quotas or tariffs to shield EU producers from a sudden influx of steel or aluminium into the EU market that would have ordinarily been destined for the US market).

With regard to the company referenced, its main activity is the production of alumina which is then exported for further processing to aluminium. I understand that the company does not directly export to the US and that the tariffs in question may therefore have limited immediate direct impact. However, it may be the case that customers of the firm could be affected. The IDA is therefore closely engaging with the company to determine the potential scope of any impact and we will continue to closely monitor the situation as it evolves.

Questions - Written Answers
Science Foundation Ireland Staff

574. Deputy Seán Haughey asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation if Science Foundation Ireland has filled the post of head of international within the agency; if not, when this post will be filled; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25667/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy John Halligan): Science Foundation Ireland has filled the post of Head of International. This contract was approved by my Department and the candidate commenced in the position on 12th March 2018.

The role is a key position in the organization with responsibility for the development and implementation of SFI's international strategy, its international engagement activities and the development of its overseas footprint. Furthermore, the Head of International will be integral to SFI's Brexit-related initiatives.

EU Data

575. Deputy Michael McGrath asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the EU fines paid in each of the years 2015 to 2017, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25726/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): My Department has not paid any EU fines in the years 2015-2017.

Health Care Policy

576. Deputy Róisín Shortall asked the Minister for Health the policy direction being pursued in regard to a matter (details supplied); if his officials will be directed to support the pursuit and scope of this new work on alcohol beverage labelling; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24445/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Deputy will be familiar with Government Policy aimed at combatting the misuse of alcohol, a key feature of which is the Public Health Alcohol Bill which contains a number of provisions including one on the health labelling of alcohol products and another on the regulation of advertising and marketing of alcohol.

At present under EU food labelling rules the amount of information that must be presented to the consumer on the labels of alcoholic drinks is less than that of other food products. EU Regulation 1169/2011 on the provision of food information to consumers (FIC) provides an exemption for alcoholic beverages containing more than 1.2% by volume of alcohol from the obligation to list ingredients or provide a nutrition declaration, such as the energy value and the amounts of fat, saturates, carbohydrate, sugars, protein and salt contained in the product.

The Regulation places an obligation on the European Commission to adopt a report addressing whether or not alcoholic beverages should be covered by the requirement to provide the list of ingredients and the nutrition declaration, and the reasons justifying possible exemptions. This report was adopted by the EU Commission on 13 March 2017. In its conclusion it stated that as a first step current voluntary initiatives by industry should be allowed to develop further so as to provide a list of ingredients and nutrition declaration. The Commission invited industry to present a self-regulatory proposal that would cover the entire sector of alcoholic

beverages.

The Commission would then assess the industry's proposal and if it was considered that the self-regulatory approach proposed by industry was unsatisfactory, the Commission would then launch an impact assessment to review further available options, in line with Better Regulation principles.

On the 12 March 2018, the alcoholic beverage industry submitted a self-regulatory proposal to the Commission which consisted of a joint self-regulatory proposal from the European alcoholic beverages sectors on the provision of nutrition and ingredients listing. The proposal includes guiding principles and separate labelling proposals for each beverage sector, i.e. spirits drinks, wine, beer, cider and fruit wines.

The proposal does not contain a harmonised approach across all alcoholic beverage sectors and suggests that in certain cases some information could be provided "off label", i.e. on websites or other electronic platforms. The matter is currently being considered by the Commission to determine if EU regulation will be proposed rather than the voluntary labelling programme.

At a more global level, under the auspices of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, there are indications of some preliminary work being considered on alcohol beverage labelling. The most recent meeting of the Codex Committee on Food Labelling (CCFL) took place in October 2017.

Following a discussion paper presented by the World Health Organisation, the Committee identified a number of areas for potential future work and included in the list was alcoholic beverages labelling. A concern expressed was that similar overlapping work is underway in other international organisations. The Committee, therefore, agreed that information would be sought from member countries, via a Circular Letter (still to issue), on current practices, issues in alcoholic beverages labelling and allergen labelling; and identify in Codex where provisions already exist and any potential further role for CCFL.

The CCFL agreed to develop a discussion paper on alcoholic beverages labelling. This will be prepared by the Russian Federation with assistance from EU, Ghana, India and Senegal and future work will be subject to approval from the Codex Alimentarius Commission, at which Ireland will be represented.

My Department welcomes efforts at EU and other international levels to improve the requirements for the labelling of alcoholic beverages. While such efforts may be in keeping with Ireland's national policy on the consumption of alcoholic drinks, it will be some time before agreement on international proposals is reached. In the interim, my Department will pursue the proposals already outlined in the Public Health (Alcohol) Bill, as I believe this is in the best interest of public health.

In terms of labelling of alcohol beverages, the Public Health (Alcohol) Bill reflects the work of Codex in this area. The labelling provisions in the Bill will ensure that consumers can make informed choices about their drinking.

The Bill provides for the following information on the label of an alcohol product:

- A warning to inform the public of the danger of alcohol consumption;
- A warning to inform the public of the danger of alcohol consumption when pregnant;
- A warning to inform the public of the direct link between alcohol and fatal cancers;

- The quantity of grams of alcohol contained in the product;
- The number of calories contained in the alcohol product; and
- Details of a HSE website providing information on alcohol and related harms.

Products sold in kegs or casks will have an accompanying document with the above information. Licensed premises will have a notice with the warnings and website information as above and will confirm that a document noting the alcohol content and energy value of every product for sale in the premises is available on request. The information will also be required to be on any website that sells alcohol online. The aim is to provide consumers with information about alcohol products regardless of the manner of purchase, whether in a shop, public house, on-line, etc.

Disability Allowance Data

577. Deputy John Brady asked the Minister for Health the number of persons in receipt of disability allowance who hold a medical card. [24747/18]

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.

Proposed Legislation

578. Deputy Clare Daly asked the Minister for Health the detail of plans to repeal section 85(6) of the Assisted Decision Making (Capacity) Act 2015 in view of the repeal of the eighth amendment of the Constitution. [25123/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As the Deputy will be aware, until the result of the recent referendum has been confirmed and the Thirty-sixth Amendment of the Constitution Bill has been signed by the President, termination of pregnancy is regulated by constitutional and statute law. When the referendum result is confirmed the Protection of Life During Pregnancy Act 2013 will remain the law on the issue until such time as new legislation regulating termination of pregnancy has been passed by both Houses of the Oireachtas.

Consideration will be given in relation to potential amendments that may be required to the provisions of section 85(6) of the Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act in the context of the recent referendum result.

Abortion Services Provision

579. Deputy Ruth Coppinger asked the Minister for Health if he has had discussions with the United Kingdom authorities regarding the operation of legislation for the termination of pregnancies here and the way in which it impacts on Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25328/18]

580. Deputy Micheál Martin asked the Minister for Health if access to abortion services for women in Northern Ireland was discussed when he last spoke to his UK counterpart. [25356/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 579 and

580 together.

As the Deputy will be aware, in the referendum on the Thirty-sixth Amendment of the Constitution Bill, the people voted in favour of deleting Article 40.3.3 of the Constitution and substituting it with wording confirming that the Oireachtas may make laws for the regulation of the termination of pregnancy in this country.

On 29 May 2018, the Government approved the drafting of legislation based on the provisions of the General Scheme of a Bill to Regulate Termination of Pregnancy, published on the Department of Health website.

Work is ongoing on the legislation to regulate termination of pregnancy, the services necessary to support the implementation of this legislation, and associated costs.

I have not discussed the issue with my counterpart in the UK.

Hospital Acquired Infections

581. Deputy Clare Daly asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 132 of 24 May 2018, the exact quantum of funding allocated in 2018 to provide for the full implementation of national policies and guidelines in regard to antimicrobial resistance and healthcare acquired infections. [24236/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Following on from the answer to Parliamentary Question No. 132 of 24 May 2018, the Department in recognising the challenges of CPE for the health system held back dedicated funding for 2018. The HSE is prioritising work programmes for this funding in line with CPE risk.

The funding held back provides for a full year cost of €2 million for healthcare associated infection and antimicrobial resistance.

The need for on-going assessment of additional resources to address the challenges of drug resistant organisms for the next number of years is recognised by both the Department and the HSE. This will form part of the estimates process and service planning for 2019 and beyond.

Ambulance Service Provision

582. Deputy Pat Buckley asked the Minister for Health if a report has been carried out regarding the impact on the loss of the ambulance base in east County Cork; if not, the reason therefore; and if he will institute a report on the impact of same. [24247/18]

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

Disability Support Services Provision

583. Deputy Michael Healy-Rae asked the Minister for Health the reason a person (details supplied) cannot access a bus service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24250/18]

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 provision of transport to adults with a disability attending HSE-funded day services is not a core health service, and the HSE endeavours to ensure that all service users access public transport, including rural transport services, if possible. This is in keeping with the principle of mainstreaming with a clear focus on ensuring persons with a disability have access to the normal range of services and participate in community life as far as possible. In general, day service users are in receipt of disability allowance and are automatically entitled to the Free Travel Pass.

However when all other options are exhausted, and a person cannot avail of a day service because they do not have transport to attend, some transport is provided by disability service providers on a case by case basis as resources allow. Service providers are continuously reviewing their transport arrangements to ensure that they are used as effectively and equitably as possible within available resources. This may result in the provision of a reduced quantum of service to the service user, and the HSE does its best to provide transport in certain cases without reducing services.

The HSE is liaising with the National Transport Authority and disability service providers to explore ways in which the Authority's services could assist people with disabilities. The National Transport Authority has a total of 17 Transport co-ordinating units called Local Link which provide safe secure and reliable Public Transport services in local and rural areas of Ireland through a combination of scheduled Public Transport services and door to door services. The HSE plans to explore the opportunities these units may provide to people with disabilities to access day services and participate in the social, educational and economic life of their local communities.

However, 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

584. Deputy Peter Burke asked the Minister for Health if a hospital appointment for a person (details supplied) will be expedited; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24251/18]

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 Overcrowding

585. Deputy Maurice Quinlivan asked the Minister for Health the number of times the full capacity protocol has been used in University Hospital Limerick to date in 2018. [24253/18]

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 Waiting Lists

586. Deputy Maurice Quinlivan asked the Minister for Health the number of patients who have had to wait on trolleys in University Hospital Limerick to date in 2018. [24254/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): University Hospital Limerick (UHL) recorded a year-to-date total of 2408 patients waiting on trolleys in the first four months of 2018. This represents an increase of 13.7% or 290 more patients waiting on trolleys in the first four months of 2018 as compared to the same period last year.

Contributing to this increase is the fact that UHL recorded the second highest number of Emergency Department attendances in the first four months of 2018, up 11%, and a 7.9% rise in admissions in UHL in the same period.

A new Emergency Department was opened at UHL in May 2017. This €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.

In addition UHL has put in place a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) setting out specific mitigating actions to improve patient flow and improve processes in the ED and UHL is now fully engaged with the National Patient Flow Improvement Project, as a pilot site, to further improve processes within the hospital.

As Minister for Health, I am committed to continuing the effort to address overcrowding in our Emergency Departments, and, 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. I understand this will include proposals in relation to UHL.

Hospitals Building Programme

587. Deputy Maurice Quinlivan asked the Minister for Health the status of the provision of a 96-bed extension to University Hospital Limerick. [24255/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): My Department has asked the Health Service Executive to provide the Deputy with the current position on the extension to University Hospital Limerick.

Hospital Waiting Lists

588. 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 in issuing a date for the procedure in view of the significant length of time that the person has spent on the waiting list to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24257/18]

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

589. Deputy Michael Healy-Rae asked the Minister for Health the status of a MRI appointment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24268/18]

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 Care Policy

590. Deputy Anne Rabbitte asked the Minister for Health his plans to roll out a national scheme to allow children who do not need medical or surgical management to be examined in the community by optometrists; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24271/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter it has been re-

ferred to the HSE for direct reply to the Deputy.

Health Care Policy

591. Deputy Anne Rabbitte asked the Minister for Health his plans to roll out the Sligo cataract scheme nationally with optometrists and hospital eye departments working together; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24272/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply to the Deputy.

Health Care Policy

592. Deputy Lisa Chambers asked the Minister for Health the status of the development of a national women's health action plan as committed to in the National Strategy for Women and Girls 2017-2020; the funding allocated to the development of the plan for 2018, 2019 and 2020; the projected timeline for its completion; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24277/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne): The National Strategy for Women and Girls, 2017-2020 (NSWG) was published in April, 2017, and is the framework through which the Government is pursuing actions to advance the rights of women and girls, and to enable their full participation in Irish society.

Implementation is co-ordinated by the Department of Justice and Equality. The Department of Health was represented on the Strategy Committee that developed the NSWG, and is also represented on the Committee overseeing its implementation, which has met on three occasions since the NSWG launch, on 13th July and 26th September, 2017 and 25th January, 2018. A further meeting is scheduled for 13th June, 2018.

The Department of Health is principally involved with implementation of Objective Two of the NSWG; "Advance the Physical and Mental Health and Wellbeing of Women and Girls".

Action 2.1 of the NSWG commits to "Strengthen partnership work with the National Women's Council of Ireland (NWCI) in identifying and implementing key actions to address the particular physical and mental health needs of women and girls in order to advance the integration of their needs into existing and emerging health strategies, policies and programmes through an action plan for women's health".

Under this Action, the Department and the HSE are working with the NWCI, and, potentially, additional relevant organisations, including others in receipt of funding from the HSE, such that an advanced partnership approach can be developed to support the implementation of existing actions and needs outlined in the NSWG.

The Healthy Ireland Framework provides the over-arching context for progressing actions with regard to the health and wellbeing of women and girls. Healthy Ireland takes a whole of Government and whole of society approach to improving health and wellbeing, with a focus on prevention, reducing health inequalities and keeping people healthier for longer.

Within the context of Healthy Ireland, there are currently a number of issues where improvements in the health and wellbeing of women and girls could have significant impacts; these are set out in the NSWG.

These include improving awareness and supporting healthier choices in terms of smoking cessation, safer alcohol consumption, improving uptake of the HPV vaccine, increasing physical activity participation rates in younger women and improving rates of folic acid consumption and breast-feeding.

The Healthy Ireland approach is that many organisations have a role to play in achieving the goals of Healthy Ireland and in implementing the various strategies and plans under the Healthy Ireland aegis. Hence, the Department of Health and the HSE will continue to work in partnership with the NWCI and other relevant organisations, to support women and girls in improving their health and wellbeing.

The NWCI have been funded for work in the area of gender and health since 2011. This work has evolved to scope the development of the Women's Health Action Plan in partnership with the HSE in 2018. A number of engagement meetings have taken place in 2018 between representatives of the NWCI and the HSE in order to advance this work.

While the work is at an early stage of scoping, it is clear that there are a number of key programmes across the HSE which currently target and engage successfully on women's health; these include the Early Childhood Programme and the Tobacco Programme, the Sexual Health and Crisis Pregnancy Programme, the Perinatal and Mental Health Programme and the Maternity and Infant Health Programme as well as significant work under the Primary Care and Social Inclusion areas.

The scoping work will include gathering existing data on women's health and commitments in existing policies that support women's health and wellbeing. This work is underway but is at an early stage.

The Department of Health will continue to support the HSE and NWCI in furthering their aims regarding women's health and in developing the Women's Health Action Plan.

Cancer Screening Programmes

593. Deputy Clare Daly asked the Minister for Health when it is likely that there will be a change in regard to which labs are used to analyse smear tests for the CervicalCheck programme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24325/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I have asked the HSE to introduce HPV testing as the primary screening method for the prevention of cervical cancer as soon as possible. The HPV test is more accurate testing mechanism than liquid-based cytology, which is the current testing mechanism, and its use would result in fewer false negative results. Its introduction is in line with developments in cervical screening internationally.

Switching to HPV testing as the primary screening mechanism will require a reconfiguration of laboratory services. While the extent to which the HPV testing can be done in Ireland is being assessed, it is likely that a tendering process will be needed to meet at least some of the HPV testing requirement.

Health Care Policy

594. Deputy John Brassil asked the Minister for Health the status of the re-evaluation of the national eye care plan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24328/18]

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 Provision

595. Deputy John Brassil asked the Minister for Health the steps being taken to reduce the waiting time for access to orthodontic care for minors in the CHO 4 area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24331/18]

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

596. Deputy Seán Barrett asked the Minister for Health his plans to introduce a community-based children's optometrists scheme in order to address the waiting lists that exist for children to receive eye examinations; his further plans to roll out the Sligo cataract scheme (details supplied) across the country; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24348/18]

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

597. Deputy Thomas P. Broughan asked the Minister for Health if he will engage with an organisation (details supplied) and the pharmaceutical industry to ensure that all new life-changing medicines are made available to persons with MS in a timely manner; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24349/18]

689. Deputy Michael McGrath asked the Minister for Health the position on the approval of new medicines for persons with multiple sclerosis; his plans for reforms to address delays in this area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24696/18]

765. Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív asked the Minister for Health the medicines not available to persons suffering from multiple sclerosis that are available in other EU member states; the reason for this; the engagement he plans to have with an organisation (details supplied), other EU states and the pharmaceutical industry to ensure that the drugs are available and licensed here and covered by the GMS scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25040/18]

781. Deputy Jan O'Sullivan asked the Minister for Health the way in which he plans to address the wait time for drugs to be approved for persons with MS; if he will engage with an organisation (details supplied) and the pharmaceutical industry to ensure new medicines are available to persons with the condition; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25118/18]

814. Deputy Sean Fleming asked the Minister for Health if his Department will engage with an organisation (details supplied) and the pharmaceutical industry to ensure that new medicines are available to persons with multiple sclerosis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25231/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 597, 689,

765, 781 and 814 together.

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 am keen to engage with Industry and to explore ways in which new medicines might be more easily introduced in Ireland. However, any innovative approaches that may be tabled must be compatible with the statutory provisions which are in place and must also recognise the fundamental pricing/funding issues in the context of finite Exchequer resources.

I have indicated willingness to meet with MS Ireland and my office is in contact with the organisation to arrange a mutually convenient date.

Departmental Management Structures

598. Deputy Louise O'Reilly asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 13 of 2 June 2016, if policy issues in respect of abortion are still subsumed into the tobacco and alcohol control unit of his Department; if so, the reason it has not been changed; if a new unit will be established within his Department to oversee abortion and other related matters; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24357/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As the Deputy is aware, overall responsibility for abortion policy lies under the remit of the Chief Medical Officer. Within the division of the Chief Medical Officer, the issue of abortion is dealt with by the Bioethics Unit, which has responsibility for, inter alia, abortion policy and legislation and related matters.

National Maternity Strategy Expenditure

599. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Health the funding allocated to the implementation of the National Maternity Strategy for 2018, 2019 and 2020; the way in which this funding allocation is broken down; the specific funding allocated to the roll-out of a national perinatal mental health service for the same period; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24363/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Implementation of Ireland's first National Maternity Strategy - Creating a Better Future Together 2016-2026 - is being led by the National Women and Infants Health Programme. To that end, the Programme has developed a detailed Implementation Plan and estimated that full implementation will cost in the region of an additional €80 million revenue funding over the lifetime of the Strategy. Work to identify the precise capital funding requirement is ongoing. The Strategy will be implemented on a phased basis and therefore the funding requirement will vary from year to year. In that context, the Implementation Plan will inform the annual Estimates process each year.

In 2018, €4.15m has been allocated for the Strategy, and in that regard, the Programme has prioritised; improving quality and safety, establishing community midwifery teams and increasing access to anomaly scans. This follows previous investment of €3m development funding provided for maternity services in 2016 and increased funding of €6.8m provided in 2017. That money was allocated in line with the Strategy and included funding for additional staff, including 100 midwives, the development of specialist bereavement teams and for the implementation of the Maternal and Newborn Clinical Management System.

Regarding perinatal mental health, €1 million was allocated in 2017 to start three specialist perinatal hubs in Galway University Hospital, Cork University Maternity Hospital and University Maternity Hospital Limerick and to expand the small existing teams in the three Dublin based maternity hospitals. I understand that a further €2 million will be provided to complete each of these six hub teams; €0.2m of which is being allocated this year while the remaining €1.8m will be allocated in 2019.

I have asked the HSE to reply to you directly to provide further detail on the relevant allocations.

Health Care Policy

600. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health when a revised HSE national consent policy will be published which omits paragraph 7.7.1's exceptions to the principle of consent [24380/18]

601. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health the measures he is taking to inform all medical practitioners and persons in associated professions that the exception contained in paragraph 7.7.1 of the HSE's national consent policy no longer applies. [24381/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 600 and 601 together.

As the Deputy's query relates to a HSE publication, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

However, as the Deputy will be aware, until the result of the recent referendum has been confirmed and the Thirty-sixth Amendment of the Constitution Bill has been signed by the President, termination of pregnancy is regulated by constitutional and statute law. When the referendum result is confirmed the Protection of Life During Pregnancy Act 2013 will remain

the law on the issue until such time as new legislation regulating termination of pregnancy has been passed by both Houses of the Oireachtas.

Cancer Screening Programmes

602. Deputy Thomas P. Broughan asked the Minister for Health if he has been informed by the HSE if it ensured that outsourced cervical screening tests had to be examined for a minimum amount of time; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24389/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): All laboratories contracted by Cervical-Check must operate in line with Quality Assurance standards and requirements set out by the cervical screening programme. Each laboratory is subject to ongoing monitoring by the programme to ensure compliance with QA standards.

Although there are no specific guidelines in relation to how long cytology screening staff should assess an individual sample, the current standard specifies that, in order to maintain quality, accuracy and safety in the screening process, the maximum time spent on primary screening LBC smear test samples must not be exceeded. This is set as 5 hours per day.

There is a maximum screening per annum of 12000 smears. Every test is examined by two screeners. All screeners (including supervisory screening staff) are expected to maintain their competence through participation in proficiency testing schemes, recognised cervical cytopathology External Quality Assurance schemes and in-house training, as appropriate.

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. Smear tests can produce both false positive and false negative results. However, the Scoping Inquiry and the Independent Clinical Expert Review will provide independent and international scrutiny of performance.

Health Care Policy

603. Deputy Thomas P. Broughan asked the Minister for Health the steps he has taken over the past year to implement Sláintecare; his plans in this context for budget 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24390/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Sláintecare Report represents a significant milestone in the history of our health services development in Ireland. I intend to harness the consensus generated by the Report to move forward with a programme of health reform. This Government is committed to making tangible improvements in our health service and the Sláintecare Report provides the direction of travel for this.

The development of a Sláintecare Implementation Plan is now well advanced and I expect to bring proposals to Government for consideration in the coming weeks. This plan will set out a detailed programme of reform to be undertaken in the years ahead.

I have already taken action on several of the specific recommendations proposed in the Sláintecare report. A Sláintecare Programme Office is being established in the Department of Health. This office will be tasked with implementing a programme of reform, as agreed by Government, arising from the Sláintecare Report. The appointment of an Executive Director for the Sláintecare Programme Office will be made shortly.

An independent board for the HSE is being established as recommended in the Sláintecare report. The General Scheme of a Bill has been published and it is hoped that legislation will be enacted this year.

The Sláintecare Report recommended the removal of private practice from public hospital. I have established an Independent Review Group to examine how private practice can be removed from public hospitals. It will report later this year.

A public consultation on the geographical alignment of Hospital Groups and Community Healthcare Organisations has recently been completed and will inform work on broader health service structural reform as recommended in the Sláintecare report.

Finally, the Government has demonstrated significant commitment to invest in our health and social care services since the publication of the Sláintecare report. Funding for new initiatives in Budget 2018 were closely aligned with proposals in Sláintecare. These new initiatives included investing €25 million a new Primary Care fund, additional funding of €25 million allocated for home care and transition beds, €17 million to reduce medicine and prescription charges, €75 million targeted to reduce waiting list and €1 million for the Sláintecare Programme Office.

The Health Service Capacity Review, which was called for in the Report, was published in January, and the recently published National Development Plan contains a commitment to fund significant new capacity – 2,600 acute hospital beds and 4,500 community care beds over the next decade. It also contains funding to deliver on the eHealth strategy in full which is a key recommendation in Sláintecare.

As the Deputy is aware, Budget 2019 will be subject to discussions with the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform in the normal manner and I am not able to comment on specifics at this stage.

Nursing Homes Support Scheme Administration

604. Deputy Charlie McConologue asked the Minister for Health the status of the negotiations between his Department and the farming organisations with a view to introducing a cap on the number of years farmland can be calculated as an asset for the purposes of making contributions towards the fair deal scheme; his plans to reduce the number of years an asset must be transferred to a family member before it becomes ineligible as an asset for means; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24392/18]

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

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

It is proposed to amend the scheme to treat farm and business assets in the same manner as the principal private residence where a family successor commits to working the farm or busi-

ness, i.e. to cap contributions at three years.

The Department of Health has been examining the potential for changes to the treatment of business and farm assets under the Nursing Homes Support Scheme. The Department has had a number of engagements with the Irish Farmers Association (IFA) in this regard. 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 circulated to other Government Departments for observations.

Currently an asset which has been transferred within 5 years prior to the date on which an application for State support is first made is considered a transferred asset and is included in the financial assessment under the Scheme. There are currently no plans to amend this provision.

Medical Conditions

605. Deputy Noel Rock asked the Minister for Health his plans to support myalgic encephalomyelitis patients and carers; if his Department will review the HSE's handling of this condition; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24401/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service issue this Parliamentary Question has been referred to the Health Service Executive for a direct reply.

Hospital Waiting Lists

606. Deputy Timmy Dooley asked the Minister for Health the status of surgery for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24406/18]

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.

Autism Support Services

607. Deputy David Cullinane asked the Minister for Health if it is policy to send children

with autism spectrum disorder to the UK if no residential placement is available here or to place a child in an adult psychiatric ward as an interim measure; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24409/18]

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

608. Deputy Clare Daly asked the Minister for Health the strategy in place to provide services for school leavers and young persons who are exiting RT programmes in 2018. [24426/18]

609. Deputy Clare Daly asked the Minister for Health the steps he is taking to develop a long-term strategy to put in place adequate services to meet the growing needs of those exiting disability and RT services on reaching 18 years of age. [24427/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): I propose to take Questions Nos. 608 and 609 together.

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

HSE Disability Services engages in a detailed and person centred process with a wide range of agencies every year to identify the most appropriate service provider and quantum of service and to meet the individual needs of each school leaver. This process takes place over a number of months and is led by the needs of each individual school leaver. In addition, HSE Disability Services also engages with individual school leaver families to listen to, and address, any concerns they may have regarding the process. Funding of €12.5 million has been allocated to fund day services for school leavers and people leaving rehabilitative training this year.

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

Disabilities Assessments

610. Deputy Catherine Murphy asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to a submission by a group (details supplied) regarding the HSE's implementation from 30 April 2018 of the standard operating procedure for the assessment of need; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24434/18]

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 Products

611. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will be supplied with medical supplies; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24436/18]

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

612. **Deputy Michael Harty** asked the Minister for Health if he will address a matter (details supplied) regarding cataract waiting lists; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24437/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Improving waiting times 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 (or NTPF) and the Health Service Executive (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 and as a result, 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.

Nursing Home Fees

613. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the difference between the fee for private and HSE run nursing homes (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24438/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): The Nursing Homes Support Scheme (NHSS), commonly referred to as Fair Deal, is a system of financial support

for people who require long-term residential care. Participants contribute to the cost of their care according to their means while the State pays the balance of the cost. The Scheme aims to ensure that long-term nursing home care is accessible and affordable for everyone and that people are cared for in the most appropriate settings.

In relation to variations in the cost of care for public and private nursing homes it is acknowledged that public nursing homes have, in general, a higher cost of care. It is understood that a number of factors contribute to this such as higher dependency levels of residents requiring a higher staff skill mix, environmental implications for staffing levels and the geographical provision of residential placements.

That said, there is a need to undertake a deeper analysis of the factors driving the higher costs of care in public units. The 2015 Review of the Nursing Homes Support Scheme identified the need for a Value for Money and Policy (VFM) review of the cost differentials in public and private/voluntary residential facilities. The Department will be working on this review throughout the year.

I have also asked the Interdepartmental Working Group established to oversee the implementation of the recommendations contained in the NHSS Review 2015 to examine the issue of additional charges, as part of its on-going work.

In the first instance a Department of Health/HSE project group was established to examine the high level issues regarding additional charges in nursing homes participating in the NHSS. The project work is underway and the team has written to a number of private/voluntary and public nursing homes with a view to arranging individual meetings to examine the matter. On foot of this initial engagement, visits to nursing homes are being scheduled and will be conducted over the coming weeks.

The implementation of any recommendations arising from this work will be developed with the input and support of relevant stakeholders from the sector.

Autism Support Services

614. Deputy Róisín Shortall asked the Minister for Health the waiting times for children to access speech and language therapy, psychological therapy and occupational therapy at Beechpark Services for children with autism spectrum disorder in north-west areas of County Dublin in tabular form; the steps he will take to address the waiting lists; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24441/18]

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.

Medicinal Products Regulation

615. Deputy Róisín Shortall asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 771 of 7 November 2017, the status of the PRAC's review of valproate; the response of the HPRA to the outcome of this review; the steps it will take to increase awareness of the potential side effects of this drug in pregnant women; the multidisciplinary team services that are available to children born with FACS; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24443/18]

675. Deputy Sean Fleming asked the Minister for Health his views on the prescribing of sodium valproate to treat epileptic disease and seizures in respect of women who are pregnant; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24643/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 615 and 675 together.

The European Medicines Agency's Pharmacovigilance Risk Assessment Committee (PRAC) completed its review of sodium valproate in February 2018, and recommended new measures to avoid exposure of babies to valproate-containing medicines in the womb. These measures were subsequently endorsed by the Coordination Group for Mutual Recognition and Decentralised Procedures - Human (CMDh), a medicines regulatory body representing all EU and EEA member states. Because the CMDh position was agreed by majority vote, it was sent to the European Commission, which issued a final legally binding decision valid across the EU on 31 May.

The new measures include a ban on the use of valproate-containing medicines for migraine or bipolar disorder during pregnancy, and a ban on using such medicines to treat epilepsy during pregnancy unless there is no other effective treatment available.

In addition, these medicines must not be used in any woman or girl able to have children unless the conditions of a new pregnancy prevention programme are met. The programme is designed to ensure that patients taking valproate are fully aware of the risks and the need to avoid becoming pregnant while taking the drug.

The Health Products Regulatory Authority (HPRA) is working with national stakeholders, including patient representatives and healthcare professionals, to implement the new risk minimisation measures in Ireland, including materials developed to support safe prescribing and dispensing of valproate, and in particular to ensure that patients and carers are fully informed of the risks and can discuss options with their doctor.

Measures currently being updated in line with the new recommendations include:

- Changes to the product information for patients and healthcare professionals;
- A visual warning on the packaging of valproate medicines;
- Revised educational materials for patients and doctors; and
- A patient alert card to be attached to the product packaging

The HSE is working in partnership with relevant patient representatives and clinical experts to review the diagnostic and support services required by people who may have been affected by foetal anticonvulsant syndrome (FACS).

For women currently taking sodium valproate, which is marketed under the brand name Epilim in Ireland, the clear advice from the HPRA and the HSE is that they should not stop taking this medicine suddenly; instead they should get in touch with their doctor or pharmacist for further guidance.

Disabilities Assessments

616. Deputy Róisín Shortall asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the concerns being raised by parents, schools and representative bodies of relevant allied professionals regarding the new HSE model for assessments of need which will not involve a diagnosis as part of the assessment process; the rationale behind these changes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24446/18]

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

617. Deputy Niamh Smyth asked the Minister for Health if an appointment for a person (details supplied) will be expedited as a matter of urgency; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24453/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Deputy's question relates to service delivery matters and accordingly I have asked the HSE to respond directly to her.

Nursing Home Services

618. Deputy Fergus O'Dowd asked the Minister for Health the position regarding each of the recommendations made in a report (details supplied) on a nursing home; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24454/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): Following the publication of the report referred to by the Deputy the Health Service Executive established a working group in 2007 to coordinate and finalise all outstanding issues pertaining to the report.

The working group completed a comprehensive report in 2007 which indicated that action from the recommendations had been completed, or that work was ongoing to ensure compliance with the recommendations. The recommendations were superceded subsequently by the Commission of Investigation into the Management, Operation and Supervision of Leas Cross Nursing Home and by the Health Act 2007 which established the Health Information and Quality Authority. This provided for the registration and inspection of all nursing homes – public, private and voluntary. Independent inspections carried out by HIQA commenced on 1 July 2009. This system replaced the previous one, under which the HSE registered and inspected private nursing homes only. This responsibility is underpinned by a comprehensive quality framework comprising regulations and National Quality Standards.

The Health Act 2007 (Care and Welfare of Residents in Designated Centres for Older People) Regulations 2013, replaced the 2009 Care & Welfare Regulations. These regulations con-

tain provisions for the purposes of ensuring proper standards of care for nursing homes and include health care planning, residents' rights and protection from abuse. Operators must arrange comprehensive assessments of the health, personal and social care needs of residents and prepare and individualised care plan based on this assessment. The regulations also provide for training and staff development and include requirements for the management and control of operations of nursing homes.

Revised National Quality Standards were approved by the Minister for Health in 2016, placing a stronger focus on quality of life and a person-centred approach to the care of all residents.

The recently published overview of HIQA regulation of social care and healthcare services 2017 recognises that there remain some issues to be addressed, and the Authority will continue to focus on these key areas through its inspection programme. It acknowledged however that many nursing home providers go beyond basic compliance with the regulations and are striving to achieve quality improvement as set out in the National Standards.

Separate to the regulatory regime introduced in 2009 the Deputy will be aware that the Nursing Homes Support Scheme was also introduced that year to address the then inequity in the treatment of public and private long-term nursing home residents and to alleviate the financial hardship being experienced by long-term residents in private nursing homes. The scheme supports individuals in need of long-term nursing home care regardless of whether they choose public, private or voluntary nursing homes.

Assisted Suicide

619. Deputy Mattie McGrath asked the Minister for Health if he has reviewed or plans to review the prohibition of euthanasia, assisted dying and physician assisted suicide; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24455/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): It is an offence, under section 2(2) of the Criminal Law (Suicide) Act 1993, to assist another person in taking his or her life. Legal provisions concerning euthanasia are a matter for the Department of Justice and Equality.

The Minister for Health has no plans to review the prohibition of euthanasia and related matters.

The Department of Health engages with the HSE and nongovernmental organisations to provide palliative care to people across Ireland. Palliative care seeks to improve quality of life through the prevention and relief of pain and suffering.

Cannabis for Medicinal Use

620. Deputy Mattie McGrath asked the Minister for Health the policy position with respect to medicinal cannabis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24456/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Cannabis is strictly controlled under the Misuse of Drugs Acts 1977 to 2016, and the Regulations and Orders made thereunder.

The two most common active components found in cannabis oil are tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) and cannabidiol (CBD).

- THC is the principal psychoactive constituent of cannabis. Under the Misuse of Drugs legislation products containing THC are strictly controlled and possession is unlawful except under licence.

- CBD is derived from cannabis. However, since it is not psychoactive it is not controlled under the Misuse of Drugs legislation, and does not require a Ministerial Licence.

Access to Medical Cannabis via the Ministerial Licence Route

- Currently medical practitioners who wish to prescribe cannabis products containing THC may apply to the Minister for Health, for a licence under the Misuse of Drugs Act.

- The Chief Medical Officer has advised that the granting of such a licence must be premised on an appropriate application being submitted to the Department of Health, which is endorsed by a consultant who is responsible for the management of the patient and who is prepared to monitor the effects of the treatment over time.

How to apply for a Ministerial licence

- A medical cannabis licence application submitted to the Minister for Health, in line with the Misuse of Drugs Acts, must include:

- An outline of the treatment the patient has received to date and justification from the doctor as to why it is appropriate in their patient's specific circumstances to prescribe cannabis.

- Details of the cannabis product which it is proposed to prescribe and administer to the patient.

- The source of the cannabis product.

- The arrangements for the ongoing monitoring and care of the patient once the cannabis-based treatment has commenced.

The application must be submitted either by the patient's medical consultant, or by their General Practitioner (GP). Applications from the patient's GP must include written endorsement for the proposed cannabis treatment for the individual patients by the patient's consultant.

The decision to prescribe or not prescribe any treatment, including cannabis treatment, for an individual patient is strictly a decision for the treating clinician, in consultation with their patient. The Minister for Health has no role in this clinical decision-making process.

Consultants or GPs requiring further information or clarification in relation to the licence application process are advised to contact the Department of Health directly. Valid applications received are assessed without delay.

Medicinal Cannabis Access Programme (under development)

The Minister for Health is in the process of establishing a 'Cannabis for Medical Use Access Programme' to facilitate access to cannabis-based products, that are not authorised as medicines but are of a standardised quality and meet an acceptable level of quality assurance. The access programme will be established to provide access to cannabis treatments for patients who are under the care of a medical consultant, for the following medical conditions which have failed to respond to standard treatments:

- spasticity associated with multiple sclerosis resistant to all standard therapies and interventions;

- intractable nausea and vomiting associated with chemotherapy;
- severe, refractory (treatment-resistant) epilepsy that has failed to respond to standard anticonvulsant medications.

An Expert Group appointed by the Minister has drawn up clinical guidance for healthcare professionals treating patients through the Access Programme and Department of Health Officials are working on legislation to underpin the Access Programme. The access programme is not yet in operation.

In the meantime access to cannabis for medical treatment is via the aforementioned Ministerial licence application route, which will continue to operate in parallel to the Cannabis for Medical Use Access Programme, once the programme becomes operational.

National Drugs Strategy Implementation

621. Deputy Mattie McGrath asked the Minister for Health the status of the implementation of the Misuse of Drugs (Supervised Injecting Facilities) Act 2017; the costs to date associated with the operation and staffing of such supervised injecting facilities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24457/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne): The establishment of a pilot supervised injecting facility is a commitment in the Programme for a Partnership Government and is a key action in the national drugs strategy, Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery. The purpose of the facility is to provide a clean, safe, healthcare environment where people who inject drugs can access medical and social services from healthcare professionals. The ultimate aim is to reduce the number of heroin-related deaths, of which there were 82 in 2015.

The legislative basis for the establishment of such a facility is set out in the Misuse of Drugs (Supervised Injecting Facilities) Act 2017 (No.7 of 2017), which came into operation on 30 November 2017.

The Department of Health allocated €1.5m to the HSE for the establishment of the pilot facility for 2018.

In February 2018, the HSE announced Merchants Quay Project CLG as the preferred bidder to operate a supervised injecting facility in Dublin city centre on a pilot basis. The awarding of the contract followed a HSE procurement process initiated in August 2017 and is subject to normal planning permission approval.

I understand that no resources for the facility have been allocated to Merchants Quay Project pending the awarding of planning permission from Dublin City Council.

I support the establishment of a supervised injecting facility as a public health initiative to save lives and to ensure safer communities. Evidence from countries with such facilities shows that they are cost-effective in the long-run, through reducing ill-health for injecting drug users and by improving the environment for residents and businesses. Engaging with local stakeholders, including schools, is therefore an important element of the set up and running of the facility.

Gender Equality

622. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Health if he or his Department has raised the phenomenon of gendercide at national or international fora; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24458/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): No, neither I nor my Department have done so.

Ministerial Meetings

623. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the number of meetings or engagements he and his Department have had with organisations (details supplied) in the past three years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24459/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Since my appointment as Minister for Health I have attended a photocall on 14 July 2016 and a campaign event earlier this year on 10 April with Amnesty International.

No Departmental staff were present at these events.

Health Services Data

624. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health the number of full and partial lower limb amputations were carried out in 2017; the number of these patients with diabetes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24466/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond to the Deputy directly.

Health Services Data

625. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health the number of patients treated for foot ulcerations which do not require a full or partial limb amputation in 2017, by county; the number of those patients with diabetes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24467/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond to the Deputy directly.

Health Services Data

626. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health the number of patients under 65 years of age treated for foot ulcerations which did not require a full or partial limb amputation in 2017, by county; the number of these patients with diabetes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24468/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond to the Deputy directly.

Health Services Data

627. Deputy Róisín Shortall asked the Minister for Health the number of full and partial lower limb amputations that were carried out in 2017, by county on persons under 65 years of age; the number of these patients with diabetes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24469/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond to the Deputy directly.

Health Services Data

628. Deputy Róisín Shortall asked the Minister for Health the number of bed days required by patients treated for foot ulcerations which did not require a full or partial limb amputation in each of the years 2015 to 2017; the number of those patients with diabetes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24470/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond to the Deputy directly.

Health Services Data

629. Deputy Róisín Shortall asked the Minister for Health the number of hospital bed days required by patients treated for foot ulcerations which did not require a full or partial limb amputation in each of the years 2015 to 2017; the number of those patients with diabetes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24471/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond to the Deputy directly.

Health Services Data

630. Deputy Róisín Shortall asked the Minister for Health the number of hospital bed days required by patients undergoing full and partial lower limb amputation procedures in each the years 2015 to 2017, by county on persons under 65 years of age in tabular form; the number of these patients with diabetes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24472/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond to the Deputy directly.

Health Services Data

631. Deputy Róisín Shortall asked the Minister for Health the number of hospital bed days required by patients on persons under 65 years of age by county treated for foot ulcerations which did not require a full or partial limb amputation in each the years 2015 to 2017; the number of these patients with diabetes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24473/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond to the Deputy directly.

Cancer Screening Programmes

632. Deputy Róisín Shortall asked the Minister for Health his views on the discrepancy between the evidence provided by CervicalCheck and the records of the State Claims Agency in regard to women being informed of the results of the CervicalCheck audit; if CervicalCheck had accepted or denied the alleged confirmation provided to the State Claims Agency; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24475/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I understand that both parties have been invited to appear before the Public Accounts Committee this week which will provide an opportunity to address these issues.

Services for People with Disabilities

633. Deputy Seán Haughey asked the Minister for Health if Health Service Executive services will be made available to a person (details supplied); if measures will be taken to reduce the waiting lists for the services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24478/18]

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

634. Deputy Seán Haughey asked the Minister for Health if Health Service Executive services will be made available to a person (details supplied); if measures will be taken to reduce the waiting list for the services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24479/18]

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

635. Deputy Seán Haughey asked the Minister for Health if Health Service Executive services will be made available to a person (details supplied); if measures will be taken to reduce

waiting lists for the services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24480/18]

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

636. Deputy Seán Haughey asked the Minister for Health if Health Service Executive services will be made available to a person (details supplied); if measures can be taken to reduce the waiting list for the services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24481/18]

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

637. Deputy Seán Haughey asked the Minister for Health if Health Service Executive services will be made available to a person (details supplied); if measures can be taken to reduce the waiting lists for the services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24482/18]

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 Care Packages Provision

638. Deputy Seán Haughey asked the Minister for Health if the Health Service Executive

will provide a home care package for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24483/18]

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 Reports

639. Deputy John Brassil asked the Minister for Health if he is satisfied with the progress of implementation of recommendations of the eye services review group report; his views on whether the review group's recommendations will be in place within the outlined timeframe; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24493/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The HSE published the Report of the Primary Care Eye Services Review Group in June 2017. The overall aim of the Review is to reorganise primary care eye services with an increased emphasis on maximising delivery of a comprehensive service at primary care level, thereby also releasing capacity in the acute sector to provide more complex services. This reflects Government policy, which aims to maximise the proportion of people's healthcare needs met in the community.

To support the implementation of the Report, funding of €1m was allocated in 2018 to establish primary care eye teams in South and West Dublin and to further develop the primary care eye team in North Dublin to help alleviate waiting lists. Further steps towards implementation of the recommendations in the Report will be considered in the context of the Health budget for 2019 and future years.

Health Services Staff Data

640. Deputy John Brassil asked the Minister for Health the number of the 144 additional posts needed to transfer outpatient department eye services to primary care as recommended by the eye services review group report that have been filled; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24494/18]

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 Staff Data

641. Deputy Fergus O'Dowd asked the Minister for Health the number and location of paediatric vascular surgeons here; the number of operations carried out by location from January 2017 to date in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24498/18]

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.

Dental Services Provision

642. Deputy Gino Kenny asked the Minister for Health if a new dental scheme will be

agreed with an association (details supplied) which will examine prioritising prevention for medical card patients and affording them access to the same standard of care as dentists provide to private patients; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24499/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The national approach to future oral health service provision will be informed by the National Oral Health Policy, which is currently being finalised and which I expect will be published later this year.

The aim of the policy is to develop a model of care that will enable preventative approaches to be prioritised, improve access, and support interventions appropriate to current and future oral health needs.

It is my intention to progress the development of appropriate contractual proposals on the part of my Department and the HSE once the oral health policy has been published. This will be a necessary precursor to a process of engagement with the Irish Dental Association on the future delivery of oral health services.

Medical Card Data

643. Deputy Pearse Doherty asked the Minister for Health when a new scheme to replace the motorised transport grant and mobility allowance schemes will be introduced; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24500/18]

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 4,046 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.

Medical Card Data

644. Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin asked the Minister for Health the percentage of the population with discretionary medical cards; the number of discretionary medical cards which this percentage relates to based on the current population by month to date in 2018. [24503/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In reply to the Deputy's question please see the following table outlining the number of discretionary medical cards, and the percentage of the population covered by these cards, by month for 2018.

2018	No. of Discretionary Cards	% of population
May	137,313	2.87%
April	135,728	2.83%
March	134,437	2.81%
February	133,211	2.78%
January	131,160	2.74%

Medical Card Data

645. Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin asked the Minister for Health the number of discretionary medical cards awarded, renewed, expiring and in existence, respectively at any one time in the year by community healthcare organisation in tabular form. [24504/18]

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.

Health Care Policy

646. Deputy Fergus O'Dowd asked the Minister for Health the national protocols in place

for the administration of psychotropic drugs to patients in nursing homes and other institutions in which persons are in care; the system of monitoring and inspection in place to ensure that persons are not administered these drugs improperly or illegally; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24505/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): The Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) is the independent authority established under the Health Act 2007 to monitor safety and quality and drive continuous improvement in Ireland's health and personal social care services. Since 2009 all nursing homes - public, voluntary and private, have been registered and inspected by HIQA. This responsibility is underpinned by a comprehensive quality framework comprising Regulations and National Standards.

The Health Act 2007 (Care & Welfare of Residents in Designated Centres for Older People) Regulations, 2013 contain provisions relating to 'Medicines and pharmaceutical services' and 'Managing behaviour that is challenging' including a requirement that where restraint is used, it is used only in accordance with national policy. All nursing homes are required to have written policies on the ordering, receipt, prescribing, storing and administration of medicines and on restraint. Providers must keep detailed records of all occasions on which restraint is used. These records must be available for examination by HIQA. The regulations require providers to notify the Chief Inspector on a quarterly basis of any occasion when restraint was used. Revised National Quality Standards for Residential care settings for Older People (2016) place a stronger focus on quality of life and a person-centred approach to the care of all residents. Standard 3.4 provides that "Each resident is protected through the residential service's policies and procedures for medicines management" and Standard 3.5 requires providers to have in place "Arrangements to protect residents from harm, promote bodily integrity, personal liberty and a restraint-free environment in accordance with national policy".

National policy on restraint, including chemical, physical and environmental restraint is set out in Towards a Restraint Free Environment in Nursing Homes, (2011) and is available on the Department of Health website.

The National Dementia Strategy (2014) acknowledges that in some cases the use of psychotropic medications is appropriate in conjunction with environmental interventions for the management of behavioural and psychological symptoms of dementia (BPSD). However, anti-psychotic drugs should only be used when all other non-pharmacological interventions have first been tried and exhausted. The National Dementia Strategy recommends that the HSE develop guidance material on the appropriate management of medication for people with dementia, and in particular on psychotropic medication management, with material to be made available in all relevant settings, including nursing homes. To address this action, the HSE's National Dementia Office has convened a national interdisciplinary steering group to develop evidence-based clinical guidelines for healthcare professionals on the use of psychotropic medications in people with dementia, with a particular focus on antipsychotics. The guidelines will be submitted to the National Clinical Effectiveness Committee to be implemented as national clinical guidelines. The steering group will also develop an associated psychotropic medication audit tool and education and training materials in parallel with the clinical guidelines.

Health Services Funding

647. Deputy John Brassil asked the Minister for Health the amount of funding provided to each of the community healthcare organisations, CHOs, for implementation of recommendations in the primary care eye services review group report in 2017 and 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24507/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply to the Deputy.

Health Services Provision

648. Deputy Mick Barry asked the Minister for Health if a group has been established in his Department to examine the provision of free contraception; if the group has formulated a comprehensive response to the development of a free contraception service; the funding to be allocated to the development of this service for 2018, 2019 and 2020; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24508/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I established a group, under the chairmanship of the Chief Medical Officer, to consider the issues raised by the Joint Committee on the Eighth Amendment of the Constitution in their ancillary recommendations.

Work is ongoing to explore all of the issues associated with enhancing access to contraception.

Long-Term Illness Scheme Coverage

649. Deputy Noel Rock asked the Minister for Health his plans to add myalgic encephalomyelitis, ME, to the medical conditions listed as part of the long-term illness, LTI, scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24512/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The LTI Scheme was established under Section 59(3) of the Health Act 1970 (as amended). The conditions covered by the LTI are: acute leukaemia; mental handicap; cerebral palsy; mental illness (in a person under 16); cystic fibrosis; multiple sclerosis; diabetes insipidus; muscular dystrophies; diabetes mellitus; parkinsonism; epilepsy; phenylketonuria; haemophilia; spina bifida; hydrocephalus; and conditions arising from the use of Thalidomide. Under the LTI Scheme, patients receive drugs, medicines, and medical and surgical appliances directly related to the treatment of their illness, free of charge.

There are no plans to extend the list of conditions covered by the Scheme.

Respite Care Services Funding

650. Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin asked the Minister for Health the budget for provision of respite services in the State; the number of families accessing respite services; the average spend on respite services by the Health Service Executive, HSE, per family; and the waiting lists for respite services across the State. [24516/18]

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.

Health Services Provision

651. Deputy Sean Sherlock asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) in County Laois will receive a medical procedure. [24523/18]

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 Provision

652. Deputy Sean Sherlock asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) in County Kildare will receive a medical procedure. [24526/18]

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

653. Deputy Lisa Chambers asked the Minister for Health the number of residential care

places in County Mayo; the number of persons on the waiting list for residential care in the county; the estimated wait time and cost per place for residential care in the county; the way in which these figures compare to other counties; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24528/18]

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.

Disability Services Provision

654. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the funding allocated to residential care providers in County Mayo; his plans to provide extra funding to residential care providers in County Mayo; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24529/18]

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

655. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health if a person (details supplied) is on the waiting list for a knee replacement at Our Lady's Hospital, Navan; the status of his or her appointment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24536/18]

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

656. Deputy Clare Daly asked the Minister for Health the additional duty of care placed on a doctor prescribing an unlicensed medicine; and the additional steps the doctor must take to ensure patients' attention is being drawn to the various risks attached to prescribing of the medicine in view of the fact that the Health Products Regulatory Authority, HPRA, has no involvement in the safety of the medicine. [24542/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Under European and Irish legislation, before a medicine can be placed on the market the manufacturer must seek an authorisation from the Health Products Regulatory Authority (HPRA), or in the case of certain medicines, the European Medicines Agency.

Where a medicine is not authorised in Ireland, a licensed wholesaler may import it if it has been prescribed by a doctor for a patient under his/her care, on his/her direct responsibility and in order to meet the special needs of a patient. The process for this is described in the 'Guide to the Notification System for Exempt Medicinal Products' which is available on the website of the HPRA. For this notification scheme, there are a number of specialist wholesalers which deal with the importation of 'exempt medicines' into Ireland, via pharmacies and subject to a prescription.

The responsibility for the clinical use of unlicensed medicines lies with the prescriber. In accordance with the Medical Council's Guide to Professional Conduct and Ethics, medical practitioners must ensure as far as possible that any treatment, medication or therapy prescribed for a patient is safe, evidence-based and in the patient's best interests. This applies equally to licensed and unlicensed medicinal products.

HIQA Data

657. Deputy Fergus O'Dowd asked the Minister for Health the status of the memorandum of understanding, co-operation and information sharing signed in June 2015 between Health Information and Quality Authority, HIQA, and the Office of the Ombudsman; the number of meetings that have taken place; the level at which they have taken place; the number of cases by HIQA and the Office of the Ombudsman in which information was shared; the number of cases in which HIQA has been informed of a complaint which had already been dealt with at local level since the memorandum was signed and transferred to the office of the Ombudsman by year; the outcome of all cases; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24546/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter the question has been referred to the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

If you have not received a reply from HIQA within 15 days, please contact my Private Office and my officials will follow the matter up.

Cancer Screening Programmes

658. Deputy Michael Healy-Rae asked the Minister for Health if he will examine a series of matters on BreastCheck (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24553/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): BreastCheck, the national breast screening programme, offers free screening mammograms every two years to women within the eligible population.

The screening process seeks to identify cancer at an early stage when it has a better outcome and may be treated less aggressively with less morbidity. The program has been running since 2000 and over that time has provided more than 1.7 million mammograms to women and detected over 11,500 breast cancers; more than half of which were diagnosed at an early stage.

Until recently, the eligible age range for screening was 50 to 64. The implementation of an age extension of BreastCheck to 65-69 year olds commenced in Quarter 4 of 2015. The age extension is being implemented on an incremental basis, and it is anticipated that the full age extension will be implemented by 2021.

BreastCheck is an important aspect of cancer control in Ireland and it is not envisaged that there will be any cut to the current funding levels of the programme.

Medicinal Products Availability

659. Deputy Mick Barry asked the Minister for Health if he will meet with an organisation (details supplied) to discuss failings in the market access system for obtaining drugs for the condition. [24558/18]

837. Deputy John Lahart asked the Minister for Health if he has had or plans to have meetings with pharmaceutical companies regarding the availability of new drugs for persons with multiple sclerosis; the outcome of meetings that may have taken place; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25289/18]

927. Deputy Eamon Scanlon asked the Minister for Health the efforts being made to ensure that new medicines are available to persons with multiple sclerosis as early as possible through a fair and sustainable system; if his Department is engaging with an organisation (details supplied) regarding accessing new and effective treatments; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25580/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 659, 837 and 927 together.

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 am keen to engage with Industry and to explore ways in which new medicines might be more easily introduced in Ireland. However, any innovative approaches that may be tabled must be compatible with the statutory provisions which are in place and must also recognise the context of finite Exchequer resources.

I have indicated willingness to meet with MS Ireland and my office is in contact with the organisation to arrange a mutually convenient date.

Health Services Provision

660. Deputy Pearse Doherty asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 1051 of 16 January 2018, the progress being made to introduce dialectical behaviour therapy services for adults in County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24559/18]

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 Correspondence

661. Deputy Alan Kelly asked the Minister for Health if all electronic correspondence between him and either of his two special advisers regarding all aspects of the CervicalCheck crisis will be published; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24560/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In order to provide a clear picture of the circumstances in relation to the CervicalCheck clinical audit process, it is essential to establish the facts in a comprehensive and precise manner. It is also important to restore the trust and confidence of women in CervicalCheck.

In this regard, I have appointed Dr Gabriel Scally, President of the Epidemiology and Public Health section of the Royal Society of Medicine, to carry out an independent Scoping Inquiry and this is now well underway. My Department has established a dedicated team to oversee and progress the CervicalCheck records search, which is being informed by the broad Terms of Reference of the Inquiry. To that end, the Department has committed to a comprehensive trawl of records including as far back as 2006. This is a considerable undertaking covering paper, electronic and email records.

The trawl is being undertaken in as systematic a way as possible to ensure its thoroughness with a view to identifying with reasonable certainty all potentially relevant records held by the Department. Quality assurance processes and a system of checks are also being put in place to

ensure the process' overall validity and reliability. The format of any planned publication of the output of this process will be considered in due course but it of course includes correspondence between my advisers and me.

Programme for Government Implementation

662. Deputy Micheál Martin asked the Minister for Health the status of the implementation of the Programme for Partnership Government as it applies to his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24577/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Details of the implementation status on the Health Commitments contained in the Programme for Partnership Government are available in the Annual Report as produced by the Programme for Government office of Department of an Taoiseach.

The role of the Programme for Government Office is to monitor the implementation of the commitments contained in the Programme for Government (PfG) across all Departments. An Annual Report is published setting out the progress across Government made towards meeting those commitments. The Office publishes shorter progress reports on a regular basis also. Please see further details at: taoiseach.gov.ie/eng/Work_Of_The_Department/Programme_for_Government/Programme_for_Government.

Commencement of Legislation

663. Deputy Mattie McGrath asked the Minister for Health the number of children on the national donor-conceived person register as per the provisions of the Children and Family Relationships Act 2015; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24585/18]

733. Deputy Róisín Shortall asked the Minister for Health the position regarding the sections of the Children and Family Relationships Act 2015 which have not yet been commenced further to concerns raised by an organisation (details supplied) on behalf of same-sex couples; the reason for the delay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24903/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 663 and 733 together.

A number of technical drafting issues have come to light in relation to Parts 2 & 3 of the Children and Family Relationships Act 2015. The implications of these issues are being explored by officials in the Department of Health and the Office of the Attorney General, and as these discussions are ongoing, we do not wish to pre-empt the outcome by citing specific details. Clarification on whether primary legislation is required to resolve these issues is being sought. In the event that primary legislation is required the Minister for Health would seek to deal with it as a matter of urgency.

Medical Aids and Appliances Applications

664. Deputy Michael Healy-Rae asked the Minister for Health the status of an application by a person (details supplied) for a wheelchair; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24591/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply to the Deputy.

Health Services Staff

665. Deputy Michael Harty asked the Minister for Health if exceptions to Health Service Executive, HSE, Circular 15/2017 (details supplied) will be considered; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24601/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I understand you are referring to the Department of Health Circular 15/2017 of 6 December 2017 which allows certain public servants in the health sector to remain in employment beyond their compulsory retirement age of 65 years until they reach the eligibility age for the Contributory State Pension, currently 66 years.

As you are aware, my colleague the Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure & Reform, Paschal Donohoe, T.D., secured Government approval in December 2017 for an increase in the compulsory retirement age to 70 years for public servants who are currently required to retire at 65 years.

Primary legislation is required for this change to be implemented. The Government has approved the General Scheme of a Bill to give effect to its decision and I understand that the drafting process is currently underway and that the Bill is on the list of priority legislation for publication in the current session. Indeed, I understand that the drafting of the legislation is significantly advanced with an expected publication date, subject to Government approval, of the end of June.

In advance of the legislation coming into effect, the Government agreed that interim arrangements would be introduced for serving public servants who reach the age of 65 years between the date of the Government Decision and the coming into effect of the necessary legislation. These arrangements enable such public servants to be retained until they reach the age of eligibility for the Contributory State Pension, 66 years.

These are strictly interim arrangements to be applied to public servants up to the date of their eligibility for the Contributory State Pension only. This reflects the Government Decision and therefore there are no provisions for any exceptions to the criteria for retention as set out in the Department of Health Circular 15/2017.

Home Help Service Provision

666. Deputy Sean Fleming asked the Minister for Health the status of home help and other support in the home available to a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24607/18]

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

HSE Funding

667. Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy asked the Minister for Health the reason fund-

ing has been withdrawn by the Health Service Executive that makes possible an annual one week holiday for medium-term and long-term patients living in community based Health Service Executive owned homes (details supplied) in counties Laois and Offaly. [24614/18]

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.

Alcohol Pricing

668. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Health his plans to amend the Public Health (Alcohol) Bill 2015 to include a ban on below invoice cost selling in view of the fact that minimum unit pricing will be delayed pending the formation of a power sharing executive in Northern Ireland in order to ensure the practice of retailing cheap alcohol at below cost cannot continue in the short-term; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24617/18]

669. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Health his views on introducing a ban on below invoice cost selling of alcohol to augment minimum unit pricing in view of concerns that minimum unit pricing will not impact the pricing of premium branded alcoholic products; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24619/18]

670. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Health his views on introducing a ban on below invoice cost selling of alcohol in view of the fact that minimum unit pricing would still legally allow for a six pack of beer to be discounted by as much as €4.50 from its invoice cost which could not happen if there was a ban on below invoice cost selling; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24620/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 668 to 670, inclusive, together.

The primary policy objectives of the Public Health (Alcohol) Bill are to:

- regulate the supply and price of alcohol in order to minimise the possibility and incidence of alcohol related harm;
- delay the initiation of alcohol consumption by children and young people;
- reduce the harms caused by the misuse of alcohol; and
- reduce alcohol consumption to 9.1 litres of pure alcohol per person per annum by 2020.

One of the measures through which the Bill aims to achieve its objectives is through the introduction of Minimum unit pricing.

Minimum unit pricing targets cheaper alcohol relative to its strength because the price is determined by and is directly proportionate to the amount of pure alcohol in the drink. This means that the price of individual products will depend on their strength.

A ban on below cost selling based on the invoice cost price of the alcohol product to the retailer does not target strong, cheap alcohol. It does not address the health harms associated with the harmful consumption of strong cheap alcohol products. This is because products that are cheap relative to their alcohol content will continue to be sold at a level that represents a serious threat to public health.

Research carried out by the University of Sheffield indicates that a ban on below-cost selling would have a negligible impact on alcohol consumption or related harms as many of the cheapest alcohol products are already priced in or around excise duty plus VAT.

In addition to Minimum unit pricing the Bill provides for the making of regulations prohibiting or restricting price-based promotions which, either alone, or in tandem with minimum unit pricing would be effective in reducing alcohol consumption, related harms and associated costs.

The Government Decision approving Minimum unit pricing acknowledged the need for this jurisdiction and Northern Ireland to act simultaneously in order to allay concerns about impacts on cross-border trade. I recognise that it will be most effective if an equivalent measure is introduced in Northern Ireland at the same time. However, Minimum Unit Pricing is an important measure and on that basis I will reflect further, after the enactment of the Bill, before deciding on the timing of the commencement of this provision.

HSE Data

671. Deputy Anne Rabbitte asked the Minister for Health the average height of children here aged between 6 to 18 years of age according to Irish data or comparative international data which his Department has access to by age bracket and gender in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24621/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Deputy's question has been forwarded to the HSE as the Department does not have this data.

Alcohol Sales Legislation

672. Deputy Anne Rabbitte asked the Minister for Health the rationale for the selection of a 1.2 metres separating barrier contained under section 22 of the Public Health (Alcohol) Bill 2015; if this was developed using scientific best practices; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24622/18]

673. Deputy Anne Rabbitte asked the Minister for Health his views on the reason a 1.2 metres separating barrier contained under section 22 of the Public Health (Alcohol) Bill 2015 will reduce the visibility of alcohol to children in view of the fact that the height of the barrier equates to the height of a seven year old according to recent UK statistics (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24623/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 672 and 673 together.

Section 22 of the Public Health (Alcohol) Bill introduces a statutory framework for the separation and visibility of alcohol products and advertising in mixed retail outlets and is designed to address the relationship between alcohol and children by reducing the likelihood that they will be exposed to alcohol products and advertising in their daily lives.

As drafted, the Bill required that alcohol products were not "readily visible" in mixed retail outlets. This formulation led to some uncertainty so on that basis, I provided for a specific height for the required barrier of a minimum of 1.2 metres. In proposing that minimum height, I recognised the concern that a higher barrier might expose retailers to non-compliance with certain requirements, such as those related to planning or fire safety legislation.

The presence of a physical barrier will ensure there is a marked separation of alcohol products from other ordinary products in a mixed-retail outlet and the minimum height is such to ensure reduced visibility of alcohol products for young children.

National Disability Strategy Implementation Plan

674. Deputy Anne Rabbitte asked the Minister for Health the budget set aside for the roll-out the three-year action plan for the NDS from 2017 to 2020; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24626/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): The Department of Health works on a cross-sectoral collaborative basis with other Government Departments on national policies for adults and children with a disability. Disability is not a health issue, nor is it an education issue, or employment issue. It is an equality issue.

The National Disability Inclusion Strategy (NDIS) 2017 – 2021, takes a whole of Government approach to improving the lives of people with disabilities both in a practical sense, and also in creating the best possible opportunities for people with disabilities to fulfil their potential. It is intended that it will make a significant difference over its lifetime to the position of people with disabilities in Irish society.

The Strategy contains eight themes as follows:

- Equality and Choice;
- Joined up policies and public services;
- Education;
- Employment;
- Health and Wellbeing;
- Person centred disability services;
- Living in the Community; and
- Transport and Accessible Places.

Underpinning these themes are a set of high level objectives, and 114 measurable and time-specific actions that relate to the areas of education, employment, provision of public services, health, transport, and personal safety and autonomy.

The Department of Justice and Equality has lead responsibility for the NDIS. The Strategy is a cross-government approach that brings together actions by different Departments and State agencies including:

- Department of Education and Skills;
- Department of Health;
- Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection;
- Health Service Executive;
- National Disability Authority;

- Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government;
- Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport;
- National Transport Authority; and
- Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

The focus in the Strategy is on better coordination and use of existing resources. The key issue in relation to the implementation of the Strategy is the coordination of all departmental efforts in this area by the Department of Justice and Equality.

Question No. 675 answered with Question No. 615.

Hospital Appointments Administration

676. Deputy Robert Troy asked the Minister for Health if an appointment for an angiogram for a person (details supplied) will be scheduled; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24644/18]

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 Staff Data

677. Deputy Sean Fleming asked the Minister for Health the number of health care assistants in the community in an area (details supplied); the number of vacancies for these positions in the area; the number of unfilled posts for these positions in the area; the position regarding the national rolling recruitment campaign in respect of these posts; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24645/18]

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

Health Services Staff Data

678. Deputy Sean Fleming asked the Minister for Health the number of public health nurses working in the community with the elderly in an area (details supplied); the number of

vacancies for such posts; the number of unfilled positions; if the national rolling recruitment campaign is being availed of in this region; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24646/18]

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

Medicinal Products Regulation

679. Deputy Michael McGrath asked the Minister for Health the procedure in place for the approval of medicinal cannabis oil for individual persons; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24654/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Cannabis is strictly controlled under the Misuse of Drugs Acts 1977 to 2016, and the Regulations and Orders made thereunder.

The two most common active components found in cannabis oil are tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) and cannabidiol (CBD).

- THC is the principal psychoactive constituent of cannabis. Under the Misuse of Drugs legislation products containing THC are strictly controlled and possession is unlawful except under licence.

- CBD is derived from cannabis. However, since it is not psychoactive it is not controlled under the Misuse of Drugs legislation, and does not require a Ministerial Licence.

Access to Medical Cannabis via the Ministerial Licence Route

- Currently medical practitioners who wish to prescribe cannabis products containing THC may apply to the Minister for Health, for a licence under the Misuse of Drugs Act.

- The Chief Medical Officer has advised that the granting of such a licence must be premised on an appropriate application being submitted to the Department of Health, which is endorsed by a consultant who is responsible for the management of the patient and who is prepared to monitor the effects of the treatment over time.

How to apply for a Ministerial licence

- A medical cannabis licence application submitted to the Minister for Health, in line with the Misuse of Drugs Acts, must include

- An outline of the treatment the patient has received to date and justification from the doctor as to why it is appropriate in their patient's specific circumstances to prescribe cannabis.

- Details of the cannabis product which it is proposed to prescribe and administer to the patient.

- The source of the cannabis product.

- The arrangements for the ongoing monitoring and care of the patient once the cannabis-based treatment has commenced.

- The application must be submitted either by the patient's medical consultant, or by their General Practitioner (GP). Applications from the patients GP must include written endorsement for the proposed cannabis treatment for the individual patients by the patients' consultant.

Questions - Written Answers

The decision to prescribe or not prescribe any treatment, including cannabis treatment, for an individual patient is strictly a decision for the treating clinician, in consultation with their patient. The Minister for Health has no role in this clinical decision-making process.

Consultants or GPs requiring further information or clarification in relation to the licence application process are advised to contact the Department of Health directly. Valid applications received are assessed without delay.

Information on legal status of THC and CBD:

For the purposes of clarity the following information may be helpful.

Cannabis is strictly controlled under the Misuse of Drugs Acts 1977 to 2016, and the Regulations and Orders made thereunder.

The two most common active components found in cannabis oil are tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) and cannabidiol (CBD).

- THC is the principal psychoactive constituent of cannabis. Under the Misuse of Drugs legislation products containing THC are strictly controlled and possession is unlawful except under licence.

- CBD is derived from cannabis. However, since it is not psychoactive it is not controlled under the Misuse of Drugs legislation, and does not require a Ministerial Licence.

Hospital Staff Recruitment

680. Deputy Thomas Byrne asked the Minister for Health if there are difficulties with the recruitment of medical scientists in the biochemistry and haematology departments in Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital, Drogheda. [24655/18]

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

Hospital Staff Recruitment

681. Deputy Thomas Byrne asked the Minister for Health if the HSE has recently advertised for medical scientists in the biochemistry and haematology departments in Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital, Drogheda. [24656/18]

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.

Health Services

682. Deputy Paul Murphy asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 60 of 19 April 2018, the details regarding the circumstances of the entry of a person (details supplied) into State care, including their transfer to St. Stephen's Hospital, Glanmire, County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24658/18]

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 Funding

683. Deputy Pearse Doherty asked the Minister for Health the status of an application for capital funding for a project (details supplied) in County Donegal; if the appraisal unit assessing the application has now received all outstanding documentation in relation to the project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24660/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I have asked the Health Service Executive to provide the Deputy with the information requested with regard to the disability service in Donegal town.

Medical Card Eligibility

684. Deputy Paul Murphy asked the Minister for Health his views on providing medical cards to those with spinal cord injuries in view of the long-term and varied consequences of spinal cord injuries; if the matter will be examined; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24662/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The HSE's Expert Group on Medical Need and Medical Card Eligibility examined the issue of awarding medical cards on the basis of illness and concluded that it was not feasible, desirable, nor ethically justifiable to list medical conditions in priority order for medical card eligibility. The Expert Group also concluded that a person's means should remain the main qualifier for a medical card. This position remains unchanged.

Medical card provision is based on financial assessment. In accordance with the provisions of the Health Act 1970 (as amended), eligibility for a medical card is determined by the HSE. The Act obliges the HSE to assess whether a person is unable, without due hardship, to arrange general practitioner services for himself or herself and his or her family, having regard to his or her overall financial position and reasonable expenditure and every application must be assessed on that basis. Under the legislation, having a particular illness, in itself, does not establish eligibility for a medical card and therefore, the medical conditions of applicants for this scheme are not monitored on that basis. Where the applicant's income is within the income guidelines, a medical card or GP visit card will be awarded.

Every effort is made by the HSE, within the framework of the legislation, to support applicants in applying for a medical card and, in particular, to take full account of the difficult circumstances in the case of applicants who may be in excess of the income guidelines. It should be noted, in certain circumstances, the HSE may exercise discretion and grant a medical card, even though an applicant exceeds his or her income threshold, where he or she faces difficult financial circumstances, such as extra costs arising from an illness. Social and medical issues are considered when determining whether undue hardship exists for an individual accessing general practitioner or other medical services. The HSE affords applicants the opportunity to furnish supporting information documentation to fully take account of all the relevant circumstances that may benefit them in the assessment, including medical evidence of cost and necessary expenses.

Questions - Written Answers
Health Services Staff Data

685. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health the number of community registered general nurses working in the community (details supplied); the number of vacancies for such posts; the number of unfilled positions; if the national rolling recruitment campaign is being availed of in the region; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24665/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I have asked the HSE to revert to the Deputy with the details sought.

Home Care Packages Provision

686. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** 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. [24666/18]

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

687. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Health his plans to implement new measures to allow faster access to the child and adolescent mental health services in order to tackle increasing waiting lists such as permitting advanced nurse practitioners to carry out initial assessments to the service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24684/18]

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 Cervical Screening Programme

688. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question Nos. 381 and 382 of 15 May 2018, the laboratories which were the subject of site visits in 2011 and 2014. [24693/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I am advised by the HSE in 2011, site visits were carried out at Quest Diagnostics, Teterboro, New Jersey, and CPL, Austin, Texas, United States of America.

I am further advised that in 2014, site visits were carried out at Medlab Pathology, Dublin, Ireland, Quest Diagnostics, Teterboro, New Jersey United States of America and The Coombe Women and Infants Hospital, Dublin Ireland.

Question No. 689 answered with Question No. 597.

Nursing Homes Support Scheme Review

690. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Health the status of progress regarding the fair deal scheme in respect of farm assets; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24698/18]

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

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

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

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

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

Home Help Service Data

691. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons in counties Roscommon and Galway in receipt of home help support; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24700/18]

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 Help Service Data

692. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons in counties Roscommon and Galway, respectively, on the waiting list for home help support; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24701/18]

693. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Health the number of home help hours allocated to counties Roscommon and Galway in each of the years from 2015 to 2017 and to date in 2018. [24702/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 692 and 693 together.

As these are service matters I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Health Services Staff

694. Deputy Frank O'Rourke asked the Minister for Health if consideration has been given to appointing a dietician for north County Kildare, specifically as a support service for children with autism; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24710/18]

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

695. 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. [24711/18]

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

696. Deputy Niamh Smyth asked the Minister for Health the status of an appointment for a person (detail supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24717/18]

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 Staff

697. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health the progress being made to allocate additional advanced nurse practitioners to deliver adult and children's diabetes care services at Letterkenny University Hospital and Sligo University Hospital; when the additional posts are likely to be filled; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24745/18]

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

HSE Staff

698. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Health if there is a recruitment embargo in operation for HSE south; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24761/18]

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

Home Help Service Provision

699. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding the provision of home help or home care packages when a person (details supplied) 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. [24766/18]

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 and Home Support services to persons with disabilities. In the 2018 National Service Plan, the HSE's priority is to provide 1.46 million hours of personal assistance to more than 2,000 persons with a disability, representing an increase of 60,000 hours over the 2017 target of 1.4 million hours. The HSE will also provide 2.93 million hours of Home Support to 7,447 adults and children with disabilities, representing 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 Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

Audiology Services Provision

700. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 187 of 17 May 2018, if his attention has been drawn to the fact that the position of at least some families is that they were not communicated with appropriately or kept informed. [24770/18]

710. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 187 of 17 May 2018, if his attention has been drawn to the fact that as of 24 May 2018 the chairman of the incident group was unable to give a date for the release of the report and that it was still being finalised as of that date; and when the report will be released, in view of the fact that it was to have been published in the week beginning 21 May 2018. [24798/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 700 and 710 together.

The HSE's Report of the look-back Review of Audiology Services in Mayo & Roscommon has been finalised and was sent to families on 8 June 2018.

The HSE has advised that families affected were informed that the audit was taking place and verbally advised as to the reasons why. The final Report and accompanying communication includes an apology from the HSE for the failures identified and for the anxiety that this has caused to families and those who may have been harmed.

It also includes an invitation to the parents of children affected to meet with a HSE senior manager and a senior audiologist to discuss the finding of the Report and to be updated on their child's care.

The HSE has confirmed that all 49 children who needed follow-up as a result of the look-back process are either currently receiving or have already received the appropriate care they need.

The look-back report represents a thorough analysis of the quality of service delivery in the area against the standards for such services that were set out in the National Audiology Review Group Report (2011). Since 2011, the recommendations of this Report, including clinical governance and quality assurance processes, have been the benchmark for the quality of service delivery throughout the country.

It is appropriate that our health service strives continually to improve the quality of the services it provides and promotes a culture of learning where shortcomings are identified. My priority in relation to the families and children who have been impacted by the findings of this look-back is that the HSE takes swift action, including the provision of appropriate care, and I am satisfied that this has been done in this case.

Hospital Staff

701. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health when the persons appointed to the two ANP posts confirmed for diabetes care in County Donegal will take up their posts. [24775/18]

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

Hospital Services

702. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health if County Donegal has the requisite numbers of adults and children with diabetes types 1 and 2 to merit the locating of a centre of excellence for diabetes care at Letterkenny University Hospital. [24776/18]

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

Health Services Staff Data

703. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the number of nursing staff at Buncrana nursing unit, County Donegal in comparison to 2016 and 2017; and if all beds within the unit are operational. [24777/18]

704. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the number of nursing staff at Carndonagh Community Hospital, County Donegal, in comparison to 2016 and 2017; and whether all beds in the hospital are operational. [24778/18]

705. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the number of nursing staff at Ramelton nursing unit, County Donegal, in comparison to 2016 and 2017; and whether all beds in the unit are operational. [24779/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 703 to 705, inclusive, together.

As these are service matters I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Health Services Funding

706. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the way in which the €1 million allocated in budget 2018 for the Sláintecare implementation office has been spent; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24780/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Funding for Sláintecare related initiatives in Budget 2018 included €1 million for the Sláintecare Programme Office. This is allocated for expenditure during 2018, and will be used to cover costs relating to the Sláintecare Programme Office when it is established, including staffing costs. No Programme Office expenditure has been incurred to date in 2018.

The appointment of an Executive Director for the Sláintecare Programme Office will be made shortly.

Home Care Packages Provision

707. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Health if a home care package will be facilitated in the case of a person (details supplied); if this case will be facilitated at an early date in view of the anxiousness of their family to have them home; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24789/18]

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 Staff

708. Deputy Willie O'Dea asked the Minister for Health his views on the state of industrial relations in the University Limerick hospital group, especially at the hospital in Dooradoyle; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24793/18]

709. Deputy Willie O'Dea asked the Minister for Health the reason the HSE has failed to deal with an employee of the HSE at University Hospital Limerick (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24796/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 708 and 709 together.

The Department is aware that an individual case is being investigated locally in University Hospital Limerick (UHL) in line with the HSE's Dignity at Work Policy. It is understood that details of investigators and draft Terms of Reference have been sent to the individual and their representative.

In relation to the general industrial relations climate at this location, it is understood that the hospital is engaged in process with the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) Advisory services, along with the trade union SIPTU. This is with a view to the WRC making recommendations to improve IR/HR relationships between the parties at this location.

Question No. 710 answered with Question No. 700.

Food Labelling

711. Deputy Louise O'Reilly asked the Minister for Health if his Department has been consulted on proposed EU comments on draft Codex guidelines on the use of front of pack nutrition labelling; if his Department has received a request to send DG SANTE an update of an earlier survey sent out in the context of the REFIT evaluation of the nutrition and health claims regulation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24799/18]

712. Deputy Louise O'Reilly asked the Minister for Health if his Department will be represented at the second meeting on front of pack nutrition labelling, which will take place at the end of June 2018 or early in July 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24800/18]

713. Deputy Louise O'Reilly asked the Minister for Health his plans to meet stakeholders on the use of front of pack nutrition labelling as part of the European Commission's work under way on same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24801/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne): I propose to take Questions Nos. 711 to 713, inclusive, together.

Regulation (EU) No 1169/2011 on the provision of food information to consumers (FIC) requires the European Commission to adopt a report on the use of additional forms of expression and presentation of the nutrition declaration, their effect on the internal market, and the advisability of further harmonisation in this field. Such additional forms of expression are commonly referred to as “front of pack” (FOP) nutrition labelling. A number of such schemes are already in operation within EU Member States.

The Commission has postponed adoption of a report until the end of 2018, in order to consider the technical aspects related to FOP nutrition labelling and to examine, discuss and consider the experience to date in the adoption of such FOP schemes and their usefulness to the consumer.

To that end, the European Commission convened a joint meeting between Member States, the Commission and multiple stakeholders on FOP nutrition labelling. This took place on 23 April 2018. The agenda, meeting summary and copies of the presentations are available on the Commission’s website at the following website:

ec.europa.eu/food/expert-groups/ag-ap/adv-grp_fchaph/wg_2018

An invitation has since been received from the Commission to attend a second joint meeting which is scheduled to take place in Brussels on 22 June. The detailed agenda and papers for this meeting are awaited. The meeting will be attended by officials from my Department and/or the Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI).

At the meeting on 23 April, the Commission stated that Member States will receive a request to send DG SANTE any update of an earlier survey sent out in the context of the REFIT evaluation of the Nutrition and Health Claims Regulation. My Department, in consultation with the FSAI, will respond when the request is received.

As regards FOP proposals generally, it is normal practice for the Department, in collaboration with the FSAI, to consider the views of stakeholders as appropriate. It should be noted that the overall aim of any FOP nutrition information is that it should be of practical use and benefit to consumers.

Health Services Reports

714. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Health when he plans to publish a Sláintecare implementation plan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24807/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As the Deputy is aware, I supported the work of the All-Party Committee on the Future of Healthcare and I welcomed the publication of the Sláintecare Report. The Report represents a significant milestone in the history of health services development in Ireland, and I intend to harness the consensus generated by the Report to move forward with a programme of health reform. The Government is committed to making tangible improvements in our health service and the Sláintecare Report provides the direction of travel for this.

To that end, work is at an advanced stage in my Department in developing a Sláintecare Implementation Plan. This 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 expect to bring these proposals to Government in the next few weeks and to publish the Implementation Plan shortly thereafter.

Questions - Written Answers
Disability Services Funding

715. Deputy Imelda Munster asked the Minister for Health if a task force was set up by the HSE or his Department to examine individualised funding for persons with disabilities, including intellectual disabilities; if so, if it was completed; the decision made in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24808/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): In line with a commitment in the Programme for Government I established a Task Force on Personalised Budgets for People with Disabilities on 20 September 2016.

The Task Force consisted of a Strategy Group and an Advisory & Consultative Group. It included officials from the relevant Government Departments and agencies, HSE, academic and policy experts, stakeholder organisations and a wide range of people with lived experience of disability and disability services (both intellectual and physical). Its remit was to make recommendations on personalised budgets models which will give people with disabilities more control in accessing health funded personal social services, giving them greater independence and choice in accessing services which best meet their individual needs. A Reference Group comprising people with lived experience of disability and disability services was also established, and the views of this group informed the Task Force deliberations. A public consultation was also held and the outcome contributed to the work of the Task Force.

I received the Report of the Task Force in May 2018 and I am currently considering its recommendations.

Nursing Homes Support Scheme Review

716. Deputy James Lawless asked the Minister for Health if an appeal by a person (details supplied) will be examined following a nursing homes support scheme review; if the supporting documentation will be considered; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24813/18]

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

717. Deputy Pat Buckley asked the Minister for Health the services available to assist young adults with a disability such as a person (details supplied) who had been availing of school transport accessing their continuing education as before; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24817/18]

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 provision of transport to adults with a disability attending HSE-funded day services is

not a core health service, and the HSE endeavours to ensure that all service users access public transport, including rural transport services, if possible. This is in keeping with the principle of mainstreaming with a clear focus on ensuring persons with a disability have access to the normal range of services and participate in community life as far as possible. In general, day service users are in receipt of disability allowance and are automatically entitled to the Free Travel Pass.

However, when all other options are exhausted, and a person cannot avail of a day service because they do not have transport to attend, some transport is provided by disability service providers on a case by case basis as resources allow. Service providers are continuously reviewing their transport arrangements to ensure that they are used as effectively and equitably as possible within available resources. This may result in the provision of a reduced quantum of service to the service user, and the HSE does its best to provide transport in certain cases without reducing services.

The HSE intends to liaise with the National Transport Authority and disability service providers to explore ways in which the Authority's services could assist people with disabilities. The National Transport Authority has a total of 17 Transport co-ordinating units called Local Link which provide safe secure and reliable Public Transport services in local and rural areas of Ireland through a combination of scheduled Public Transport services and door to door services. The HSE plans to explore the opportunities these units may provide to people with disabilities to access day services and participate in the social, educational and economic life of their local communities.

However, 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.

Primary Care Centres Provision

718. Deputy Joan Burton asked the Minister for Health if a new state-of-the-art primary care centre will be provided in Maynooth, County Kildare (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24833/18]

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.

Medical Card Drugs Availability

719. Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin asked the Minister for Health if EpiPens are covered on the medical card; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24841/18]

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.

Disabilities Assessments

720. Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin asked the Minister for Health the reason a person (details

supplied) has not yet received an assessment. [24842/18]

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.

Orthodontic Services Provision

721. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will receive orthodontic treatment which was identified when they were in primary school and was not delivered at that time; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24844/18]

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.

Disability Services Funding

722. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Health if funding will be made available to an organisation (details supplied) in County Donegal, in view of a recent meeting that took place between the organisation and the Minister of State with responsibility for disability issues; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24845/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): I met with a delegation from the Bluestack Foundation on Thursday 26 April 2018 and undertook to liaise with the HSE regarding possible core funding for this organisation. On the 7 of June 2018, I was advised by the HSE that funding for the Bluestack Foundation is not available presently. The HSE propose to include an estimates bid for the Bluestack Foundation for 2019 and the HSE Management locally will continue to keep in discussions with the organisation accordingly.

Hospital Appointments Status

723. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will be facilitated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24846/18]

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

724. 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 number they are on the waiting list; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24861/18]

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 Aids and Appliances Provision

725. Deputy Pat Breen asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will be facilitated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24862/18]

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.

Home Help Service

726. Deputy Frank O'Rourke asked the Minister for Health the home help supports a person (details supplied) might be entitled to; if an assessment of need will be conducted as a priority to determine the level of supports required; if these supports will be delivered within the recommended timeframe; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24865/18]

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.

Questions - Written Answers
Services for People with Disabilities

727. Deputy Aindrias Moynihan asked the Minister for Health when the HSE will arrange a meeting with its officials, an organisation and the family representatives of a person (details supplied) to discuss the person's care plan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24868/18]

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 Promotion

728. Deputy Róisín Shortall asked the Minister for Health the penalties applying to breaches of the codes of practice for non-broadcast media advertising and marketing of food and non-alcoholic beverages, including sponsorship and retail product placement; the reason the codes are voluntary and not compulsory; the proportion of the food industry and relevant media that is signed up to them; the basis on which the broadcast media are excluded from the provisions of the codes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24894/18]

729. Deputy Róisín Shortall asked the Minister for Health the codes of practice in place specifically to ensure that foods high in fat, sugar and salt are marketed and advertised in a responsible way in broadcast media; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24895/18]

731. Deputy Róisín Shortall asked the Minister for Health the companies that have signed up to the codes of practice for non-broadcast media advertising and marketing of food and non-alcoholic beverages, including sponsorship and retail product placement; and the companies that have withdrawn from the codes. [24898/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne): I propose to take Questions Nos. 728, 729 and 731 together.

The national Obesity Policy and Action Plan (OPAP) was approved by the Government in 2016. The OPAP recommended that a code of practice for food and beverages promotion, marketing and sponsorship be developed, implemented and evaluated in conjunction with the food industry, HSE, Dept of Children and Youth Affairs, safefood, Food Safety Authority of Ireland and advertiser organisations. The OPAP premised this recommendation by providing that 'already there are many examples of the food industry making positive contributions to the prevention of obesity and it is essential to capitalise and expand on such initiatives'.

On this basis, the group that developed and agreed the Codes involved representatives from the food industry (IBEC, Food Drink Ireland, Retail Ireland), advertising sector (Association of Advertisers in Ireland, Advertising Standards Authority of Ireland, Institute of Advertising Practitioners in Ireland), statutory agencies, and various Government Departments. It was chaired by the former CEO of the statutory Food Safety Authority of Ireland.

I launched the Codes in February. Their overall objective is to reduce exposure of the Irish population to marketing initiatives relating to foods that are high in fat, sugar and/or salt.

The Codes of Practice are one of the suite of actions set out in the OPAP in the knowledge that no single sector or agency, or no single action, is able to solve this issue on its own. Everyone and every sector have a role to play in those solutions. They apply to non-broadcast media given that the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI) is the regulator of broadcasting in Ireland with its own Children's Commercial Communications Code.

Section 10 of the Codes of Practice provides for a governance framework for these codes. It stipulates that the Codes will be monitored for compliance and effectiveness by a Monitoring Body designated by the Minister for Health. Work on this designation is underway.

The Monitoring Body will maintain and publish a register of signatories of companies and partner organisations that will sign up to the Codes. Section 10 adds that complaint procedures will be an integral part of the agreed Codes of Practice and that it will have the responsibility to investigate any complaint submitted and seek remedial action if necessary. The Monitoring Body shall produce an annual report for the Minister which shall cover effectiveness and complaints. All complaints upheld will be published.

Primary Care Centres Provision

730. Deputy Marc MacSharry asked the Minister for Health the timeframe for the provision of a primary care centre in Kinlough (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24897/18]

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.

Question No. 731 answered with Question No. 728.

Abortion Legislation

732. Deputy Róisín Shortall asked the Minister for Health his plans to include a protest exclusion zone as part of the legislation to be enacted following the recent referendum in the interests of the mental health and personal safety of both patients and healthcare providers as well as on data protection grounds; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24901/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): A Bill to Regulate Termination of Pregnancy is currently being drafted. The issue of exclusion zones will be examined in the context of this legislation.

Question No. 733 answered with Question No. 663.

Respite Care Services Provision

734. Deputy Fergus O'Dowd asked the Minister for Health his plans to provide alternative respite care whilst the renovations of the Boyne View Centre, Drogheda is being refurbished; the details of the project; his further plans to minimise the impact to service users; and if he will

make a statement on the matter. [24904/18]

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 Help Service Provision

735. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Health the status of an application by a person (details supplied) for five hours home help; and when they can expect a decision on their case. [24911/18]

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.

Abortion Services Provision

736. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Health if, in view of the previous history of rogue abortion counselling services and the general lack of proper psychological services in this area, he will further prioritise professional services for women considering abortion in addition to the speedy and effective rolling out of the arrangements for the statutory registration of counsellors and psychotherapists; the timeline up to the point of the actual registration of individual practitioners and the protection of titles; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24915/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Regulations to designate the professions of counsellor and psychotherapist under the Health and Social Care Professionals Act 2005 were approved by both houses of the Oireachtas on 22 March 2018. I am pleased to advise that I have since signed the regulations, which will come into force on 2 July 2018.

Work is now underway to appoint the 13 member registration board which will regulate the professions. The Public Appointments Service will undertake an advertisement campaign later this month inviting suitably qualified and experienced persons to apply for lay and professional positions on the board.

It is envisaged that CORU will arrange for the board to hold its first meeting later this year and begin the substantial programme of work required to establish its registers. This includes advising the Health and Social Care Professionals Council and me as Minister on such outstanding issues as titles to be protected by regulation, the qualifications that ought to be required of existing practitioners in order to register and the making of associated bye-laws. When the registers are opened, a two year transitional period will commence during which time existing practitioners can apply for registration. When this transitional period expires, both titles will be protected under the Act for the exclusive use of professionals registered with the Counsellor and Psychotherapist Registration Board.

Following the result of the referendum on the Thirty-sixth Amendment of the Constitution Bill, held on 25 May 2018, the Department of Health is working with the Office of the Attorney General to progress the drafting of a Bill to Regulate the Termination of Pregnancy.

Special Educational Needs Service Provision

737. Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin asked the Minister for Health the reason a person (details supplied) has not yet been contacted on securing a place in school. [24916/18]

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

738. Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 305 of 6 February 2018, the reason students that started after 2012 are not entitled to transport to assist them getting to and from the service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24917/18]

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

Psychological Services

739. Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin asked the Minister for Health if a primary care psychologist will be found during a period (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24918/18]

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 Services

740. Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin asked the Minister for Health if a person (details supplied) is entitled to convalescent care for post-operation from Tullamore General Hospital. [24919/18]

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 Provision

741. Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin asked the Minister for Health if a situation relating to

transport for a person (details supplied) in County Kildare will be examined. [24920/18]

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

Services for People with Disabilities

742. Deputy Michael McGrath asked the Minister for Health the number of children in Cork city and county on the waiting list for an assessment of need; the number waiting by periods (details supplied) in each HSE area in the county; the expected waiting time for a child being put on the waiting list today by each HSE area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24921/18]

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

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

Nursing Homes Support Scheme Applications

743. Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett asked the Minister for Health if in the case of a fair deal scheme being granted to an applicant, if the money can be backdated to the day of application in the event that the applicant had to go into a nursing home in advance of the decision on application being made; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24931/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): The Nursing Homes Support Scheme is a system of financial support for those in need of long-term nursing home care. Participants contribute to the cost of their care according to their means while the State pays the balance of the cost. The Scheme aims to ensure that long-term nursing home care is accessible and affordable for everyone and that people are cared for in the most appropriate settings.

The Department of Health agree a set level of funding for the NHSS with the HSE each year having regard for the demand for the Scheme and the overall fiscal position. The 2018 budget for NHSS is €962m. In order to manage the demand for the Scheme over a 12 month period, the HSE has a target of maintaining the wait time for funding approval at no more than 4 weeks. This target has consistently been achieved since April 2015 and it is a significant reduction from the October 2014 wait time of 15 weeks. The target of 4 weeks for approval of funding remains a commitment in the Programme for a Partnership Government. State support can only be paid once a financial assessment has been completed and authorised.

The National Guidelines for the Standardised Implementation of the NHSS provide that State Support and the Nursing Home Loan should be paid in respect of qualified applicants from either the date that the application is approved, or date of admission to the nursing home

whichever is the later. Therefore in the case where an applicant is already residing in a nursing home when they apply for State support through NHSS this support will be paid from the date that the application is approved and cannot be backdated to the admission date.

This provision enables the HSE to manage the budget and commitments under the Scheme over a 12 month period, ensuring that long-term residential care remains accessible and affordable for those that require it.

Hospital Waiting Lists

744. Deputy Lisa Chambers asked the Minister for Health the position a person (details supplied) is on the waiting list for urgent back surgery in both Mayo University Hospital and University Hospital Galway; the estimated waiting time for this surgical procedure; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24938/18]

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 Promotion

745. Deputy Róisín Shortall asked the Minister for Health the position of Ireland on the World Health Organization's international code of marketing of breast milk substitutes or later updates of this code; and the way in which Ireland endeavours to meet the requirements of the code. [24946/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne): A key policy priority for my Department and the HSE is to increase the proportion of people who are healthy at all stages of life through the Healthy Ireland Framework, Healthy Ireland – A Framework for Improved Health and Well-being 2013-2025.

This involves addressing risk factors and promoting protective factors at every stage of life, including the period from the pre-natal stage and through childhood, to support health and well-being.

Ireland is committed to the promotion, support and protection of breast-feeding as a priority for children's health and recognises breast-feeding as the biologically normal feeding method for infants and young children and ensures optimum growth and development.

My Department is aware of the considerable evidence of the importance of breast-feeding to

the health of both mothers and infants. Children who are not breast-fed have a higher incidence and severity of many illnesses and breast-feeding is also a significant protective factor against obesity in children.

My Department and the World Health Organisation (WHO) recommend exclusive breast-feeding of infants for the first 6 months, after which mothers are recommended to continue breast-feeding, in combination with suitably nutritious and safe complementary foods (semi-solid and solid foods) until their children are 2 years of age or older.

The National Maternity Strategy 2016-2026: Creating a Better Future Together (2016) outlines the responsibilities of my Department, our Health Service Executive and the National Women & Infants Health Programme in relation to the promotion, support and protection of breast-feeding.

Actions include improvements in support for breast-feeding both within the hospital and in the community; compliance of all maternity units with the Baby Friendly Health Initiative; implementation of the WHO Code; and breast-feeding promotion campaigns.

The HSE has recently launched a 5 year Breast-feeding Action Plan to increase levels of those both initiating and continuing breast-feeding up to 6 months exclusively and up to 2 years with suitable complementary foods.

The Breast-feeding Action Plan sets out the priority areas to be addressed over the next 5 years to improve breast-feeding supports, to enable more Irish mothers to breast-feed and to improve health outcomes for mothers and children in Ireland. The actions include the implementation of policies at hospital and community level; investment in breast-feeding training and skills development for healthcare staff; the provision of additional lactation specialist posts; and partnership working to promote a culture that accepts and supports breast-feeding maternal education and social class.

One specific action is to strengthen compliance with the International Code of Marketing of Breast Milk Substitutes and subsequent World Health Assembly (WHA) resolutions. This will include developing measures to improve and monitor compliance. The International Code & WHA resolutions will become policy for all Government departments, the HSE & contracted agencies and services. The HSE is drafting a policy to support the International Code of Marketing and this will be implemented by the HSE through partnership & cross- sectorial working and will be ongoing.

Hospital Services

746. Deputy Thomas P. Broughan asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 798 of 17 April 2018, when the seven remaining rooms will be operational and fully staffed before the end of 2018 in view of the clear need for same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24972/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Deputy's question relates to service delivery matters and accordingly I have asked the HSE to respond directly to him.

General Practitioner Services Provision

747. Deputy John Brady asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the fact that the current general medical services general practitioner in Carnew, County Wick-

low has retired earlier than originally anticipated; the position regarding the recruitment of a replacement general medical services general practitioner for the area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24977/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As these questions relate to service matters, I have arranged for the questions to be referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Assisted Human Reproduction Services Provision

748. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health when IVF funding will be provided; if there is pending legislation in this area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24983/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As the Deputy will be aware, the Government approved the drafting of a Bill on assisted human reproduction (AHR) and associated areas of research in October last year. The introduction of legislation in relation to AHR and associated research is a priority for me and officials in my Department are engaging with the Office of the Attorney General in relation to the process of drafting this Bill. The General Scheme is published on my Department's website and the Joint Committee on Health is currently conducting a review of the General Scheme of the Assisted Human Reproduction Bill 2017 as part of the pre-legislative scrutiny process, which began in January of this year.

In order to support the commencement of the legislation, officials in my Department will work during 2018 with the HSE to develop a model of care for infertility to ensure the provision of safe, effective and accessible services through the public health system as part of the full range of services available in obstetrics and gynaecology.

Part of this work includes identifying policy options for a potential public funding model for AHR treatment. Once I have had the opportunity to consider these policy options I will bring a Memorandum to Government for a model of public funding for AHR treatment for the Government's consideration and decision.

It should be noted that any funding model that may ultimately be introduced would need to operate within the broader regulatory framework set out in the AHR Bill and a model of care for infertility.

Data Protection

749. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the way in which his Department is engaging with the Department of Justice and Equality on section 32 of the Data Protection Act 2018, specifically on the provision for the drawing up of codes of conduct intended to contribute to proper application of GDPR with regard to the processing of the personal data of children for the purposes of direct marketing and creating personality and user profiles (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24992/18]

750. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to section 32 of the Data Protection Act 2018, specifically regarding the provision for the drawing up of codes of conduct intended to contribute to proper application of GDPR with regard to the processing of the personal data of children for the purposes of direct marketing and creating personality and user profiles; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24993/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 749 and 750 together.

Section 32(1)(e) of the Data Protection Act 2018 provides that the Data Protection Commission shall encourage the drawing up of codes of conduct intended to contribute to the proper application of the Data Protection Regulation with regard to the processing of the personal data of children for the purposes of direct marketing and creating personality and user profiles.

I am fully committed to protecting the rights and privacy of all individuals, including children, as provided for in the General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Acts.

My Deputy refers to Codes of Practice for the advertising and marketing of food and non-alcoholic drinks. In the context of these Codes, my Department holds no personal data or has no direct involvement in processing personal data of children for the purposes of direct marketing and creating personality and user profiles. These Codes of Practice provide for monitoring for compliance and effectiveness of the Codes by a monitoring body which I will designate. Monitoring will include independent research to assess adherence. The designated monitoring body will have access to relevant data from companies and partner organisations.

Any new processing activity carried out on behalf of the Department in the future, which involves personal data, will be subject to the full requirements of the data protection legislation, including a data protection impact assessment and any other additional safeguards which may be appropriate.

Hospital Acquired Infections

751. Deputy Clare Daly asked the Minister for Health if the families of the 74 persons who died as a result of CPE in University Hospital Limerick were provided with full information in regard to the risks of CPE colonisation, the precautions required to prevent its spread and the mortality risk when CPE enters the bloodstream following detection of CPE colonisation; and if the external review into the deaths of these persons examined whether full information was provided to families in this regard. [24996/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Minister and the Department have been kept informed of an External review commissioned last year by University Limerick Hospital Group, regarding patients with CPE. The HSE has advised that the Review has been completed and the report will be published shortly which will provide information on the management of CPE in University Hospital Limerick. The scope and conduct of Reviews are covered by HSE Policy. The HSE continues to update the Department on this matter.

Hospital Acquired Infections

752. Deputy Clare Daly asked the Minister for Health if the families of the 74 persons who died as a result of CPE in University Hospital Limerick were informed that an external review into the deaths was under way and were kept informed as the review progressed. [24997/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Minister and the Department have been kept informed of an External review commissioned last year by University Limerick Hospital Group, regarding patients with CPE. The HSE has advised that the Review has been completed and the Report will be published shortly which will provide information on the management of CPE in University Hospital Limerick. The scope and conduct of Reviews are covered by HSE

Policy. The HSE continues to update the Department on this matter.

Hospital Acquired Infections

753. Deputy Clare Daly asked the Minister for Health if University Hospital Limerick had in place prior to the commencement of the external review into the deaths of 74 persons in whom CPE colonisation was detected, a documented system for informing persons of the risks of CPE, the precautions necessary to prevent its spread and the need to alert other healthcare facilities visited by the person of the fact of CPE colonisation upon admission to that facility. [24998/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Minister and the Department have been kept informed of an External review commissioned last year by University Limerick Hospital Group, regarding patients with CPE. The HSE has advised that the Review has been completed and the Report will be published shortly which will provide information on the management of CPE in University Hospital Limerick. The scope and conduct of Reviews are covered by HSE Policy. The HSE continues to update the Department on this matter.

Speech and Language Therapy Provision

754. Deputy Michael McGrath asked the Minister for Health if a child (details supplied) in County Cork can access speech and language therapy pending their assessment of need being carried out in view of the fact that it is likely to be some time away. [25001/18]

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 Deaths

755. Deputy Clare Daly asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 142 of 30 May 2018, if a follow-up will be made on an incident (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25003/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I have had the matter investigated by the HSE, and it has advised me that no such incident is known to have taken place.

Hospital Appointments Status

756. Deputy Aindrias Moynihan asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will receive an appointment for a brain scan at Cork University Hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25007/18]

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.

Medicinal Products Supply

757. Deputy Michael Healy-Rae asked the Minister for Health when a FreeStyle Libre device will issue to a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25009/18]

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.

Nursing Home Services

758. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Health when the review regarding the level of nursing home support payable in the case of a person (details supplied) is likely to be concluded; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25012/18]

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 Appeals

759. Deputy James Lawless asked the Minister for Health if a medical card application appeal by a person (details supplied) will be examined; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25015/18]

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.

Hospital Appointments Status

760. Deputy Pearse Doherty asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 164 of 9 May 2018; the reason a response has yet to issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25016/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The HSE have advised that a response was issued to the Deputy on 22nd May 2018.

Hospital Appointments Status

761. Deputy Pearse Doherty asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 171 of 10 May 2018, the reason a response has yet to issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25017/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I am advised by the HSE that a response has been issued to the deputy.

Mental Health Services Provision

762. Deputy Louise O'Reilly asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the waiting time for appointments to access the adult mental health services via Balbriggan primary care centre; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25033/18]

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

763. Deputy Michael McGrath asked the Minister for Health if first responders are reimbursed for expenses incurred specifically in terms of motor expenses and motor insurance costs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25036/18]

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

Nursing Homes Support Scheme

764. Deputy Martin Heydon asked the Minister for Health the status of changes proposed to the fair deal scheme to facilitate changes for farmers and small business owners; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25038/18]

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

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

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

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

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

Question No. 765 answered with Question No. 597.

National Cervical Screening Programme

766. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Health his plans to move the cervical screening process to a HPV test; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that many clinicians internationally (details supplied) recommend co-testing pap plus HPV; if consideration has been given to same; the costs and so on of co-testing; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25049/18]

767. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Health the scientific evidence and the bodies from which evidence has been gathered that has assisted him to arrive at the decision to opt for a HPV only based test in the future. [25050/18]

768. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Health if he or the HSE has costed the replacement of the national screening program with a HPV based test; and if co-testing of HPV and pap has also been costed. [25051/18]

769. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Health if HPV testing will be carried out by laboratories here and under a tendering process similar to the current regime. [25052/18]

770. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Health if new HPV testing will be standardised across all laboratories in order to ensure that variation in detection rates does not reoccur between laboratories. [25053/18]

771. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Health if public laboratories based here will be able to conduct the new HPV testing; the provisions being made to increase the capacity and infrastructure of laboratories based here to deal with the work; and if he has examined the need for future graduate programs in universities and the need for on-site facilities and training in hospitals. [25054/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 766 to 771, inclusive, together.

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

As part of the HTA, HIQA considered 32 different screening strategies, including different primary screening tests (HPV or Liquid-Based Cytology), triage tests, screening intervals, and screening exit ages in both unvaccinated and vaccinated cohorts. This included economic

modelling to project the financial cost of each of the strategies.

Currently cervical screening samples undergo cytology screening as the primary screening test and following the move to HPV testing, cervical screening samples will undergo a HPV test as the primary screening test and women whose samples show HPV infection will be triaged using cytology to determine if there are any abnormal cell changes.

The HTA did not recommend co-testing as both tests (liquid-based cytology and HPV) have been shown to be effective as a primary screening test.

I approved the switch to HPV testing as the primary screening mechanism for the Cervical-Check programme in February. The introduction of the test was intended for October of this year and I have asked the HSE to implement the move to HPV testing as the primary screening method as soon as possible.

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

Medicinal Products Supply

772. Deputy Joe Carey asked the Minister for Health the way in which his Department has engaged with industry to explore ways in which new medicines can be more easily introduced here; his plans to update statutory provisions in place regarding the matter; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25060/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The HSE has statutory responsibility for medicine pricing and reimbursement decisions, in accordance with the 2013 Act. The Act specifies the criteria for decisions on the reimbursement of medicines.

The 2013 Act does not give the Minister for Health any powers in this regard. The HSE does not require approval or consent from the Minister or Government when making a reimbursement decision.

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 works with the objective of within 180 days of receiving the application (or a longer period if further information is sought from the company), either:

adding the medicine to the reimbursement list or agreeing to reimburse it as a hospital medicine,

refusing to reimburse the medicine.

The HSE strives to reach a decision in as timely a manner as possible and within the 180 days. 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, especially when the price sought by a manufacturer poses very significant affordability challenges.

My Department is undertaking initial scoping work as a precursor to engagement with stakeholders.

Hospital Appointments Status

773. Deputy Michael Harty asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) in County Clare will receive an appointment for knee surgery in Croom Hospital, Limerick; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25065/18]

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 Provision

774. Deputy Frank O'Rourke asked the Minister for Health if the home care package funding available to CHO area 7 will be reviewed with a view to increasing it (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25070/18]

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

Nursing Staff Provision

775. Deputy Jan O'Sullivan asked the Minister for Health if funding is in place for one full-time multiple sclerosis specialist nurse position in University Hospital Limerick; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25093/18]

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

Legislative Programme

776. Deputy Róisín Shortall asked the Minister for Health his plans to introduce legislation to comply with recommendation 2.2 of the ESRI's Delivery of Pharmaceuticals in Ireland (details supplied). [25097/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Recommendation 2.2 of the ESRI's Delivery of Pharmaceuticals in Ireland is under consideration by officials in my Department.

Debt Collection

777. Deputy Catherine Murphy asked the Minister for Health if the HSE uses debt collection agencies and or appointed persons to collect outstanding fees or bills of persons (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25101/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Issues around income collection and the use of debt collection agencies are operational matters for which the HSE are responsible. Therefore I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy on this matter.

National Maternity Hospital Administration

778. Deputy Clare Daly asked the Minister for Health the agreement reached by his Department with St. Vincent's University Hospital, SVUH, in relation to the national maternity hospital; if, and the way in which under the terms of the agreement the national maternity hospital is to retain its status as a private or voluntary Catholic hospital; and the way in which and the way in which it is worded under the terms of the agreement, the ethos and values of an organisation (details supplied) is to be guaranteed. [25111/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The terms of the Mulvey agreement provide for the establishment of a new company which will have clinical and operational, as well as financial and budgetary independence in the provision of maternity, gynaecology and neonatal services.

At present, work continues on the preparation of the legal framework to protect the State's significant investment in the new maternity hospital on the St Vincent's University Hospital campus. This framework will also further underpin the operational and clinical independence of the hospital.

I can assure the Deputy that care in the new maternity hospital will be delivered without religious, ethnic or other distinction and any medical procedure which is in accordance with the laws of the land will be carried out there.

Ministerial Meetings

779. Deputy John Curran asked the Minister for Health if he has recently met with an organisation (details supplied); and if so, the outcome of the meeting. [25114/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): I have not met recently with MS Ireland. I understand that the organisation was due to meet with my colleague, the Minister for Health last week; however the meeting had to be postponed due to Government business and has not yet been re-scheduled.

Medical Aids and Appliances Provision

780. Deputy Catherine Murphy asked the Minister for Health the grants or financial sup-

ports that are available for groups seeking to purchase and install automated external defibrillators in public spaces, sports clubs and so on; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25117/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

Question No. 781 answered with Question No. 597.

Medical Aids and Appliances Provision

782. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Health the status of the progress to date in implementing a public access defibrillation programme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25122/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): A national Out of Hospital Cardiac Arrest Steering group was established in 2017. The purpose of this project is to improve survival rates for those who suffer an out of hospital cardiac arrest through the development and implementation of an out of hospital cardiac arrest strategy up to 2020. This work will support the National Ambulance Service (NAS) and Community First Responder Ireland (CFR Ireland) in their commitment to improve clinical outcomes for Out-of-Hospital Cardiac Arrest (OHCA).

It is also considering how to improve Out of Hospital Cardiac Arrest survival by strengthening the ‘Chain of Survival’ across Ireland. National and international evidence and experience will be assessed to see if it can be applied in Ireland.

The report is close to finalisation and it considers a range of measures to improve survival rates including defibrillation. It has considered the HIQA Health Technology Assessment on the cost effectiveness of a Public Access Defibrillator Programme. It notes that AEDs are more likely to have an impact on survival if people who work and live in the vicinity of the AED are CPR trained, informed of the AED location and that the existing AEDs are accessible.

It is anticipated that the report of the OHCA Steering group will provide advice to the HSE and the Department on the most effective ways of improving survival including the use of defibrillators in community settings.

Once the findings of the Steering group have been published, the relevant recommendations will be carefully considered by all parties.

Nursing Home Services

783. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the regulations placed on nursing homes by HIQA for dementia patients; the way in which this differs from non-dementia patients; if there is a requirement for extra nursing and care workers for dementia patients; if there is a requirement for secured accommodation for dementia patients; the average extra cost for a nursing home to accept a dementia patient; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25128/18]

785. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of vacant places with secured accommodation in public nursing homes, private and voluntary nursing homes, respectively in each county; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25130/18]

786. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of secured accommodation places in public nursing homes, private and voluntary nursing homes, respectively in each county; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25131/18]

787. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the number of dementia patients on waiting lists for secured accommodation in public nursing homes private and voluntary nursing homes, respectively in each county; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25132/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 783 and 785 to 787, inclusive, together.

The Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) is the independent authority established under the Health Act 2007 to drive continuous improvement and to monitor safety and quality in Ireland's health and personal social care services. Since 2009 all nursing homes have been registered and inspected by HIQA for compliance with regulations and National Quality Standards.

The Health Act 2007 (Care and Welfare of Residents in Designated Centres for Older People) Regulations 2013 require that registered providers must ensure that the number and skill mix of staff is appropriate having regard to the assessed needs of the residents and the size and layout of the designated centre. The purpose of the regulations is to ensure proper standards apply to all designated centres, irrespective of whether the residents are cognitively impaired, therefore they make no specific reference to dementia or any other condition.

HIQA assesses whether residential services are providing high quality, safe and effective services and supports to all residents, and ensures that any issues or deficits are addressed. HIQA's programme of both scheduled and unannounced inspections is aimed at ensuring that standards are maintained and where issues of non-compliance arise, that these are addressed and rectified. Over the last number of years HIQA inspectors conducted thematic inspections of nursing homes focused on dementia care and this will continue.

The National Standards for Residential Care for Older People provide a framework for HIQA to assess the quality of service provided in nursing homes. They place a strong focus on quality of life and a person-centred approach to care for all residents including those with dementia.

The Nursing Homes Support Scheme commenced in 2009. The Scheme aims to ensure that long-term nursing home care is accessible and affordable for everyone and that people are cared for in the most appropriate settings. Anyone who is assessed as requiring long-term nursing home care can avail of the scheme, regardless of age. The nursing home care provided under the scheme must be appropriate to meet the individual's care needs.

A fundamental principle enshrined in the legislation underpinning the Scheme is that of patient choice. Once a person receives approval for financial support, they can choose to enter any nursing home that is participating in the scheme in any part of the country, subject to the nursing home having an available bed and being able to cater for the person's particular needs, including their cognitive function. This applies to public, private and voluntary nursing homes alike.

In relation to costs, the price agreed between the National Treatment Purchase Fund and each nursing home participating in the NHSS is averaged to take account of the range of dependency levels of all residents.

There are a number of dementia specific residential care units across the country and most nursing homes will accommodate people living with dementia, however they may not have a

secured dementia unit or dedicated dementia beds. While some people will enter long-term care with a formal diagnosis of dementia, others will develop dementia while they are resident in the nursing home.

A survey of nursing homes in Ireland, undertaken by the Dementia Services Information and Development Centre in 2014, reported that there were 54 Dementia Specific Units accommodating 1,034 people with dementia. Figures on the number of people with dementia in long-stay care range from between 40% and 50% (O'Shea et al, 2017) however this information is not collected on a regular basis. Information on the number of people with dementia requiring long-term care is also not centrally collated by the HSE.

Nursing Homes Support Scheme

784. Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly asked the Minister for Health the rules in relation to the fair deal scheme for nursing homes with regard to the prices agreed between nursing homes and the National Treatment Purchase Fund; if there is a difference between a dementia patient and a non-dementia patient; if there is a difference in the subvention provided to nursing homes for accepting a dementia patient and a non-dementia patient as a consequence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25129/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): The National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF) negotiates with proprietors of registered nursing homes to reach agreement in relation to the maximum price that will be charged by each nursing home for the provision of long-term residential care services to residents participating in the Nursing Homes Support Scheme.

The process of setting prices with individual private and voluntary nursing homes is commonly referred to as the NTPF pricing mechanism. The NTPF has statutory independence in the performance of its function and negotiates with each nursing home on an individual basis.

For each registered nursing home a single price is agreed for all residents participating in the scheme regardless of the level of dependency and need for care. The NTPF assert that existing prices are averaged to take account of the levels of dependency that currently prevail among nursing home residents, and this already includes a significant proportion of people with dementia.

Question Nos. 785 to 787, inclusive, answered with Question No. 783.

Medical Aids and Appliances Provision

788. Deputy Aindrias Moynihan asked the Minister for Health if a person (details supplied) has received a hearing aid from the HSE. [25133/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply to the Deputy.

Health Services Provision

789. Deputy Róisín Shortall asked the Minister for Health the detail of the recent changes to children's eye care services for children aged 12 to 16 years of age; the impact these changes

have had on the provision of care for this cohort; his views on whether commercial opticians have the necessary expertise to treat children with specialised ongoing ophthalmic conditions; if the reintroduction of vouchers to help cover the cost of glasses for this age cohort will be considered; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25135/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply to the Deputy.

Health Services Provision

790. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health if concerns (details supplied) regarding type 1 diabetes services in University Hospital Kerry will be addressed; if the solutions suggested will be implemented; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25140/18]

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

Rape Crisis Network Funding

791. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Health if funding for a rape crisis outreach centre in County Meath will be provided (details supplied). [25141/18]

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.

Respite Care Services Provision

792. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an application for respite care by a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25142/18]

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 an individual case, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

Health Services

793. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Health if his attention or the attention of the HSE has been drawn to the case and or treatment of a person (details supplied) at

Waterford University Hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25143/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): I am not aware of the case referenced by the Deputy and have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Health Services Staff Training

794. Deputy Jackie Cahill asked the Minister for Health if in the development of a health-care assistance apprentice programme an organisation (details supplied) will be centrally involved in the development and implementation of it; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25144/18]

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

Disability Services Funding

795. Deputy Peadar Tóibín asked the Minister for Health if the cut in funding to an organisation (details supplied) will be reversed. [25146/18]

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.

Disabilities Assessments

796. Deputy Michael Healy-Rae asked the Minister for Health if the case of a child (details supplied) waiting to be assessed will be examined; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25150/18]

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.

Obesity Strategy

797. Deputy Denise Mitchell asked the Minister for Health when a monitoring body will be set up to monitor the voluntary codes of practice on the marketing of food and non-alcoholic beverages; the timeframe for the designation of the body; and the timeframe for the development of guidelines for implementation of the code. [25168/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The national Obesity Policy and Action Plan (OPAP) was approved by the Government in 2016. The OPAP recommended that a code of practice for food and beverages promotion, marketing and sponsorship be developed, implemented and evaluated in conjunction with the food industry, HSE, Dept of Children and Youth Affairs, safefood, Food Safety Authority of Ireland and advertiser organisations. The OPAP premised this recommendation by providing that ‘already there are many examples of the food industry making positive contributions to the prevention of obesity and it is essential to capitalise and expand on such initiatives’.

The group that developed the Codes involved representatives from the food industry, advertising sector, statutory agencies, and various Government Departments. It was chaired by the former CEO of the statutory Food Safety Authority of Ireland. The Codes of Practice concerned were published in February.

The Codes of Practice are one of the suite of actions set out in the OPAP in the knowledge that no single sector or agency, or no single action, is able to solve this issue on their own. Everyone and every sector has a role to play in those solutions.

Section 10 of the Codes of Practice provides for a governance framework for these codes. It stipulates that the Codes ‘will be monitored for compliance and effectiveness by a monitoring body designated by the Minister for Health’ and that the Codes ‘will be underpinned by guidance developed by the monitoring body with respect to its application’. It is not possible at this juncture to specify a timeframe for the development of the latter; but work on the establishment of the monitoring body is underway, and I expect that significant progress will be made in this regard in the coming months.

Commencement of Legislation

798. Deputy Mattie McGrath asked the Minister for Health the sections and parts of all legislation brought forward by his Department in each of the past four years that have yet to be commenced; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25180/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The information sought by the Deputy is set out in the following table.

Acts passed since 2014	Sections not in force	Current position
Civil Liability (Amendment) Act 2017 - Part 4	Note: The Minister for Health is responsible for Part 4 of the Civil Liability (Amendment) Act 2017.	Part 4 of the Act provides for supports for open disclosure of patient safety incidents. It is intended to commence Part 4 of the Act by the end of June 2018.

Questions - Written Answers

Acts passed since 2014	Sections not in force	Current position
Misuse of Drugs (Amendment)Act 2016	Sections 4, 5 and 7(a) and (b).	Sections 4 and 5 facilitate the commencement of provisions of the Irish Medicines (Miscellaneous) Provisions Act 2006, transferring responsibility for the issuing of controlled drug licences from the Minister for Health to the Health Products Regulatory Authority (HPRA). Sections 7(a) and (b) revoke certain statutory instruments which were confirmed under the Misuse of Drugs (Amendment) Act 2015. These sections will be commenced when new regulations are made.
Children and Family Relationships Act 2015	Note: The Minister for Health is responsible for Parts 2 and 3 of the Act.	Regulations to facilitate the commencement of Parts 2 and 3 of the Children and Family Relationships Act 2015 are being prepared. My Department is also working to resolve a small number of technical issues in order to ensure that the processes associated with Parts 2 and 3 of the Act can be commenced.
Health (General Practitioner Service) Act 2015	Section 2 - Amendment of section 58 of Health Act 1970.	Consultations are ongoing with the Office of the Attorney General (AGO). A decision will be made on commencement on the conclusion of the consultation process.

Acts passed since 2014	Sections not in force	Current position
Assisted Decision-Making(Capacity) Act 2015	<p>Note: The Minister for Health is responsible for Part 8 of the Act. Section 82, except insofar as it relates to the definition of “Minister”, sections 83 – 90, section 91(1), except insofar as it relates to definitions of “Code of Practice” and “Working Group”, sections 91(3) – 91(14), sections 92 and 93.</p>	<p>Part 8 of the Act provides a legislative framework for advance healthcare directives (AHDs).Section 91(2) of the Act was commenced on 17 October 2016 and a multidisciplinary Working Group was subsequently established by the Minister for Health to assist in the development of the Code of Practice on the AHD provisions. The Working Group will submit its recommendations for the Code of Practice on the AHD provisions to the Director of the Decision Support Service. The Director shall, with the consent of the Minister for Health, publish a Code of Practice, based (whether in whole or in part) on those recommendations. The preparation of this Code of Practice will facilitate the subsequent commencement of Part 8 of the Act, pertaining to AHDs, in its entirety.</p>
Health Identifiers Act 2014	<p>Sections 7(2)-(6), 10(3),11(1)-(5), (7), 12-20, 24, 35-39.</p>	<p>The Act provides the legal basis for the introduction of a system of unique health identifiers for (a) individuals and (b) health services providers. It was always the intention that implementation of the health identifier project would be on a phased basis. Accordingly, the commencement of the Act’s provisions, in a timely and relevant way, is intended to enable its proper implementation. The initial implementation focus is on the identifier for individuals and, necessary provisions in the Act, in that area, have been commenced.</p>

Acts passed since 2014	Sections not in force	Current position
Health (General Practitioner Service) Act 2014	Sections 2, 3(a) and 9 - Amendments to Health Act 1970 and other issues.	Following the conclusion of consultations with the Office of the Attorney General (AGO) and discussions with the HSE, a decision will be made on commencement on these sections.
Health (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2014	Sections 6(a)(iii), 12(b), insofar as it relates to the insertion of subsection (1B) of section 26 of the Health and Social Care Professionals Act 2005, section 21.	Section 6(a)(iii), part of section 12(b) and section 21 relate to the proposed division of the profession of radiographer into the two professions of radiographer and radiation therapist. The sections can be commenced when CORU (the statutory regulator for health and social care professionals) has made the necessary bye laws. It is envisaged that commencement of these sections (6(a)(iii), part of 12(b), 21) will take place during 2018.
Public Health (Sunbeds) Act 2014	Section 14.	Section 14 relates to training in the use of sunbeds by sunbed business operators or their employees. This matter is still under consideration.

Respite Care Services Availability

799. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health the number of respite beds available to persons with intellectual disabilities in County Waterford; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25193/18]

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.

Respite Care Services

800. Deputy Mary Butler asked the Minister for Health his plans in budget 2019 to increase the number of respite beds available for older persons who are dependant on a carer; his further plans to expand the allocation from two weeks to four weeks per annum; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25194/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): 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. Short stay beds are interchangeable and may be used for respite, rehabilitation or palliative care etc., depending on demand.

The Government is committed to investing in additional capacity and making tangible reforms to our model of healthcare delivery as outlined in the recently published 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.

The level of funding available for the Department of Health in 2019 and the quantum of services to be provided by the HSE will be considered as part of the national Estimates and budgetary process and National Service Planning. There are currently no plans to change the format of the respite service.

Patient Transport Provision

801. Deputy Jackie Cahill asked the Minister for Health the position regarding an incapacitated patient of a private nursing home who is unable to travel by car to a hospital for a medical appointment accessing transport by ambulance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25197/18]

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

Hospitals Data

802. Deputy Mattie McGrath asked the Minister for Health the number and location of hospitals operating under the full capacity protocol; the timeframe the protocol has been in place in each location; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25201/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The HSE National Escalation Framework, issued to the system in late 2015, consists of a tiered and incremental suite of actions to be adapted and implemented in hospitals with an ED during times when such hospitals are challenged in matching capacity and demand for acute inpatient care.

The full capacity protocol is the last escalation step in the HSE National Escalation Framework.

In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

HSE Reviews

803. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the status of and likely publication date for the development of a three year unscheduled care plan for the HSE; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25208/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Against a background of growing demand for unscheduled care and high acute hospital occupancy rates, Government provided €30 million in 2017 and a further €40 million in 2018 for measures to increase acute hospital capacity and alleviate overcrowding in Emergency Departments.

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 draft submission has been received from the HSE in this regard and is currently under consideration by my Department.

This proposal is part of continuing work to develop a three Unscheduled Care Plan by the HSE. This broader piece of work, that includes both capacity and improvement, is nearing completion with a view to the HSE being in a position to submit it to the Department in Autumn.

Health Services Provision

804. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the status of additional measures to be included in the 2018 winter initiative; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25209/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Against a background of growing demand for unscheduled care and high acute hospital occupancy rates, Government provided €30 million in 2017 and a further €40 million in 2018 for measures to increase acute hospital capacity and alleviate overcrowding in Emergency Departments.

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 draft submission has been received from the HSE in this regard and is currently under consideration by my Department.

As outlined in the Capacity Review, the demographic pressures being experienced by the health service are such as to demand not just additional capacity but continued emphasis on health and well-being initiatives, an improved model of care with a stronger role for enhanced community based services and continued improvement in productivity including in acute hospitals.

The Government has approved a record level of capital investment in health at €10.9 billion over the next 10 years. This will provide for a major enhancement of the capacity of our health services to meet demand. Importantly, the accelerated introduction of additional capacity for 2018/2019 will be matched by forthcoming reforms including the publication of a detailed Sláintecare Implementation Plan.

Hospitals Data

805. Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly asked the Minister for Health the KPIs on a daily, weekly and monthly basis as appropriate for both admitted and non-admitted patient experience time, PET, nine hour to 24 hour breaches and delayed discharges (details supplied) to date in 2018, in tabular form. [25210/18]

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.

HSE Documents

806. Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly asked the Minister for Health the status of the development of a centralised repository supported by the national document control system for the management of the HSE national PPPGs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25211/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter, the question has been referred to the Health Service Executive for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

Health Care Infrastructure Provision

807. Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly asked the Minister for Health the status of the development of family forums and residents' councils across each CHO; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25212/18]

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

HSE Governance

808. Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly asked the Minister for Health the status of the development of a contract management support unit for section 38 and 39 organisations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25213/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The HSE has made considerable progress in ensuring greater accountability in the discharge of responsibilities by both the HSE and its funded agencies in relation to the oversight of grants paid to Section 38 and 39 agencies. The HSE, for example, has implemented a Governance Framework which underpins the funding relationship between the HSE and these agencies.

While the HSE will continue to develop this Framework it has also been acknowledged that there is a need to establish Contract Management Support Units (CMSUs) in the Community Health Organisations (CHOs) to address matters such as conducting the recommended frequency of monitoring meetings in all cases and that the oversight of multi-agreement agencies is co-ordinated.

Because of the resource implications involved in the establishment of CMSUs, they will be established on a phased basis – commencing in 2018. The HSE has already established a CMSU Implementation Group and Phase 1 (2018) will include the appointment of a Head of

CMSU in each CHO area and additional staff being appointed to a number of priority CHOs.

When fully established, the CMSUs will assist service managers in managing and documenting all aspects of the relationship with agencies. The HSE will then be in a position to further enhance and oversee the delivery of services by agencies in a manner that will give on-going assurance in relation to the significant amounts of Exchequer funding involved.

HSE Reports

809. Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly asked the Minister for Health the publication date of the HSE's report on estates maintenance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25214/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): My Department has asked the Health Service Executive to provide the Deputy with the current position regarding the report referred to in his question.

Medical Qualifications

810. Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly asked the Minister for Health if he will report on the completion of analysis of the various cohorts of consultants not on the Medical Council specialist register; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25215/18]

811. Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly asked the Minister for Health the known level of compliance with the HSE consultants qualification; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25216/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 810 and 811 together.

I have asked the HSE to revert to the Deputy with the specific details sought. The HSE policy in respect of Consultant Appointments, both permanent and temporary, requires that they are on the relevant Specialist Register. This rule is in place since March 2008.

The HSE has advised my Department that as of 11 May 2018, 121 doctors who were not on the specialist register were employed in consultant roles. 51 of these were in post before the introduction of the requirement to be registered in the specialist division. 70 consultants took up post after that date.

The HSE has put in place a detailed process to manage consultants who are not on the Specialist Register. In July 2017 the HSE issued clear instructions to all hospitals to ensure:-

- (i) all consultants not on the Specialist Register are identified, using the National Doctors Training and Planning DIME database,
- (ii) that a risk mitigation plan is put in place for each post where the appointee does not hold the relevant qualifications,
- (iii) where necessary, this plan should set up access to an appropriate arrangement for senior clinical oversight as required, and
- (iv) the Hospital Groups provide an assurance to the appropriate National Service Director that the required relevant supervisory supports are in place for those Consultants not on the Specialist Register.

Hospitals have been required by the HSE to identify those Consultants engaged prior to March 2008 who do not hold Specialist Division registration and to liaise with National Doctors Training and Planning to support them in achieving registration. The HSE will bear the cost of applications to the Medical Council in these cases.

Health Services

812. Deputy Kevin O'Keeffe asked the Minister for Health the position regarding the abolition of a specific clause (details supplied). [25217/18]

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.

Nursing Staff

813. Deputy James Browne asked the Minister for Health the number of public health nurses by area within the north County Dublin area in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25221/18]

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

Question No. 814 answered with Question No. 597.

Home Care Packages Expenditure

815. Deputy John Lahart asked the Minister for Health the percentage of the budget dedicated to home care support in the CHO 7 region for 2018 that has been spent to date in the second quarter of 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25233/18]

816. Deputy John Lahart asked the Minister for Health the budget allocated to home care support in the CHO 6 region for 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25234/18]

817. Deputy John Lahart asked the Minister for Health the percentage of the budget dedicated to home care support in the CHO 6 region for 2018 that was spent in the first quarter of 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25235/18]

818. Deputy John Lahart asked the Minister for Health the percentage of the budget dedicated to home care support in the CHO 6 region for 2018 that has been spent to date in the second quarter of 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25236/18]

819. Deputy John Lahart asked the Minister for Health the number of persons who are wait-listed and priority wait-listed for home care support in the CHO 7 region in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25237/18]

820. Deputy John Lahart asked the Minister for Health the number of persons who are wait-listed and priority wait-listed for home care support in the CHO 6 region in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25238/18]

821. Deputy John Lahart asked the Minister for Health his plans to increase the budget

available for home care support in the CHO 7 region; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25239/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 815 to 821, inclusive, together.

As these are service matters I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Hospital Staff Data

822. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the number of midwifery and obstetrician-gynaecologist staff employed in the maternity unit of South Tipperary General Hospital; the number employed in each of the past five years: the number of births in the past five years; the number of unfilled or vacant posts; the length of time that such posts have remained vacant; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25258/18]

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

Hospital Staff Data

823. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the number of midwifery and obstetrician-gynaecologist staff employed by the HSE; the maternity units they are attached to; the number employed in each of the past five years; the number of births over the past five years by maternity hospital; the number of unfilled or vacant posts in maternity units nationally; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25259/18]

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

Health Services

824. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health if night time seizure assistance and accommodation will be provided for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25262/18]

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

Medical Card Eligibility

825. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Health his plans to increase the €500 eligibility limit for receipt of a medical card by a single person over 70 years of age and the €900 limit for a couple; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25271/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Under the Health (Alteration of Criteria for Eligibility) (No. 2) Act 2013, when a person attains the age of 70, the medical card income

limits are €500 gross income per week for a single person and €900 gross income per week for a couple.

Persons aged 70 or older, who are assessed as ineligible under the gross income thresholds, may also have their eligibility assessed under the means-tested medical card scheme if they so wish, for example in the event that they face particularly high expenses, e.g. nursing home or medication costs. This scheme is open to all persons, irrespective of their age and assessment is based on net income and assessable outgoing expenses. The general scheme, although having lower income thresholds, provides for income disregards and relevant outgoings to be taken into account in the assessment process.

Furthermore, persons, including those aged over 70 years, may be deemed eligible for a medical card on a discretionary basis, if they are judged to face undue hardship in arranging GP services as a result of medical or social circumstances. In addition, from August 2015, all persons aged 70 or older qualify for a GP Visit Card, regardless of income.

There are no proposals at present to amend the current income limits for the granting of eligibility for medical cards for persons aged 70 and over. However, it should be noted that the gross income limits are reviewed annually and considered in the context of the budget.

Medical Card Eligibility

826. Deputy Catherine Connolly asked the Minister for Health the reviews that have taken place of the income thresholds for medical cards; if no review has taken place, when is it expected that one will be carried out; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25272/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Reviews of income thresholds for medical cards and GP Visit cards generally is a budgetary matter and they can be reviewed in the context of the annual Estimates process. Any new policy measures around the income thresholds for either medical cards or GP visit cards to be incorporated into the forthcoming Budget will be considered by Government as part of the 2019 Estimates process and, in that context, it is too early to comment on any proposed measure at this time.

Medical Card Data

827. Deputy Catherine Connolly asked the Minister for Health the number of persons over 70 and 80 years of age, respectively that hold a medical card; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25273/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The number of persons over 70 years who hold a medical card as at 1 May 2018 is 347,676 and the number of people over 80 years who hold a medical card is 137,184. These numbers are up to 1 May 2018.

Hospital Appointments Status

828. 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. [25275/18]

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.

Freedom of Information Requests

829. Deputy Róisín Shortall asked the Minister for Health the number of FOI requests for medical files that have been made from women affected by the CervicalCheck controversy or the families of such women; the number of requests approved; the number of requests pending; the steps he is taking to assist these women in accessing their full medical files; the process for this; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25277/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I am advised by the HSE that, to date, 18 requests have been made under the Freedom of Information Act for personal records. Of those, 11 have been processed and completed and 7 remain open. The HSE has confirmed that all requests received to date have been and will continue to be processed within the timeframes set out under the Act.

More broadly, my Department of Health has written to the HSE emphasising that I expect that all patient information, including documents, files and audits related to patients, will be made available to patients or their representatives without delay.

Medical Card Administration

830. Deputy Róisín Shortall asked the Minister for Health the details of the discretionary medical cards granted to women affected by the CervicalCheck controversy; if the medical cards are only granted to women; if their spouses and children are also eligible; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25278/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As the Deputy is aware, the Government decided on 11 May 2018 to offer a comprehensive package of support measures to those women diagnosed with cervical cancer since 2008 for whom cytology review recommendations following clinical audit differed from the original test. This support package also encompassed immediate family members, including the next-of-kin of those 18 women known to be deceased.

As part of this support package, a discretionary medical card is to be provided to all the women affected and to immediate members of their family. The women will retain lifelong eligibility while the eligibility of family members will be for a period of three years. In addition, discretionary medical cards will be provided to the next-of-kin of those women known to be deceased.

These cards will be provided without the need for the standard assessment process, while the HSE has also made arrangements to ensure that the individuals concerned are not required to pay the statutory prescription charge. The process of issuing medical cards to those affected is underway and applications are being processed as a priority.

Open Disclosures Policy

831. Deputy Róisín Shortall asked the Minister for Health the timeline for the introduction of mandatory open disclosure; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25279/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Government recently gave approval to the drafting of legislative provisions to provide for mandatory open disclosure, through the development of the General Scheme of a Patient Safety Bill, which is currently being developed by officials of my Department as a matter of urgency.

These provisions to provide for mandatory open disclosure of serious patient safety incidents will be in addition to the provisions for open disclosure contained in the Civil Liability (Amendment) Act 2017. The Regulations to prescribe the process for open disclosure in line with the Civil Liability (Amendment) Act 2017 are also being drafted at present and are expected to be finalised shortly.

The Patient Safety Bill, in addition to addressing mandatory open disclosure, will also provide for a number of other important patient safety concerns, including in relation to mandatory reporting of serious incidents to an appropriate regulatory body such as HIQA, allow the Minister for Health to issue guidance in relation to clinical audit, and the extension of the remit of HIQA to private hospitals.

It is intended to seek approval to publish the draft General Scheme of the Patient Safety Bill before the summer recess.

Psychological Services

832. Deputy Gerry Adams asked the Minister for Health the number of the 114 assistant psychologist posts and 20 psychologist posts that have been filled (details supplied); the locations in which these posts will be based; when the remaining posts will be filled; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25284/18]

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.

Psychological Services

833. Deputy Gerry Adams asked the Minister for Health the impact the announced psychologist posts will have for children and young persons that are trying to access CAMHS services in County Louth; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25285/18]

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.

Questions - Written Answers
Counselling Services Provision

834. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the status of the undertaking of the HSE to examine the scope for improved ways of working through a service improvement initiative for counselling in primary care (details supplied); the outreach the HSE has undertaken with community service providers in each CHO area; the locations in which the HSE envisages these services will be rolled out; the estimated cost of same; and when the HSE expects the scoping exercise to be completed. [25286/18]

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

Counselling Services Provision

835. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health his plans to introduce a computerised cognitive behavioural programme; the engagement that has taken place with healthcare providers in each CHO area in advance of the initiative; the locations in which the programme will be rolled out; the additional resources that will be provided to enable same; the estimated overall cost of the programme; and when it is expected to be operational. [25287/18]

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.

Psychological Services

836. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health when he plans to introduce a dedicated mental health telephone and text line in 2018 in addition to a pilot telepsych initiative that will deliver mental health treatment and therapies online; the specific areas in which the phone, text and pilot service will be rolled out; if additional resources will be provided for these services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25288/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): As Minister with responsibility for Mental Health and Older People, I have set as a priority the development of a Mental Health Telephone/Text Helpline. My officials are currently working with the HSE Mental Health Services on a project aimed at improving access to mental health information and support through the harnessing of information and communication technologies.

There are a number of strands to the project as follows:

1. Enhanced web based mental health information with dynamic signposting to ensure the widest possible access to information on both mental health conditions and services.
2. An enhanced synchronous text-based (SMS / I.M. / Live chat) active listening service that will respond to queries on mental health and a 24 hour telephone service that will direct people to appropriate and relevant mental health / support services.
3. A feasibility study on the provision of online therapies and a framework for the quality standards that are required for the provision of such services. Included in this work will be an exploratory pilot study examining the feasibility and utility of providing access to Internet-

based counselling services within Primary Care Services.

I expect to launch the new service before the end of the year.

Question No. 837 answered with Question No. 659.

Medical Aids and Appliances Applications Data

838. Deputy Peadar Tóibín asked the Minister for Health the number of patients who have applied for the FreeStyle Libre sensor for the monitoring of type 1 diabetes since the product's approval for young persons between four and 21 years of age under the reimbursement scheme; the number that have been approved since 3 April 2018; the information that has been given to type 1 diabetics regarding the product; and the reason he has not approved the product for all type 1 diabetics in view of the fact that the product is tested and proven to be cost effective. [25291/18]

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 Staff Recruitment

839. Deputy Clare Daly asked the Minister for Health if an open recruitment process for the role of CEO of University Limerick hospital group was followed prior to the appointment of a new CEO in 2014. [25319/18]

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

Ambulance Service Response Times

840. Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to a recent policy change by the National Ambulance Service whereby in the event of an emergency, the national emergency operations centre issues just one SMS to a single nominee of all relevant community first responder groups in the locality of the emergency; if his attention has been further drawn to the delayed response times of community first responder groups to emergencies due to the change; if his attention has been drawn to the increased administrative burden that the change is imposing on local voluntary groups; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25330/18]

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

Services for People with Disabilities

841. Deputy Michael Healy-Rae asked the Minister for Health if he will address a matter (details supplied) regarding services for children; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25332/18]

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.

Occupational Therapy Waiting Lists

842. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an appointment with an occupational therapist for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25343/18]

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

Hospital Appointments Status

843. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Health if an appointment for a person (details supplied) will be expedited. [25346/18]

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 and Midwifery Board of Ireland

844. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health if the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland, NMBI, sanctioned a person (details supplied) in 2015 following a fitness to practice hearing. [25347/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland (NMBI) is the statutory regulatory authority for nurses and midwives in Ireland and is

responsible for holding Fitness to Practice inquiries.

Therefore I have referred the Deputy's question to the NMBI for attention and direct reply within 10 working days.

Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland

845. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health if public money is being used to fund an appeal by a person (details supplied) of the outcome of the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland, NMBI, decision made in 2015 in regard to fitness to practice. [25348/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I can confirm that no such funding has been provided by my Department. I have referred the Deputy's question to the HSE and asked them to reply directly on behalf of that organisation.

Services for People with Disabilities

846. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Health the number of staff allocated to a respite centre (details supplied) in County Donegal; if there is sufficient staff in place in order to be able to operate the centre at full capacity; the number of places available at the centre when it is at full capacity; the number of full-time care staff at the centre; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25352/18]

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.

Services for People with Disabilities

847. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding a commitment that was given to a person (details supplied) by the HSE in County Donegal to have full-time residential care in place by May 2018; the reason this has not occurred; when it is likely that this full-time residential care will be made available to them; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25369/18]

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 an individual case, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

Assisted Human Reproduction

848. Deputy Mattie McGrath asked the Minister for Health the reason the definition of close family member in the proposed legislation regulating assisted human reproduction does not include first cousins or individuals related by marriage; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25383/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As the Deputy will be aware, the Government approved the drafting of a Bill on assisted human reproduction (AHR) and associated areas of research in October last year. Officials in my Department are engaging with the Office of the Attorney General in relation to the process of drafting this Bill.

Head 17(2) of the General Scheme of the Assisted Human Reproduction Bill prohibits the use of gamete donation in an AHR treatment procedure, that would involve an embryo created through the fertilisation of the donor's gametes with gametes from a close family member of that donor. Under this Head "close family member" is defined as a parent, son, daughter, sibling (including half-brother or half-sister), grandparent, grandchild, aunt, uncle, nephew or niece, being such a family member from birth. These provisions reflect the existing legal framework which prevents sex and marriage between close genetic relatives on the basis of consanguinity.

Maternity Services

849. Deputy Mattie McGrath asked the Minister for Health the costs associated with the implementation of the maternity and infant care scheme for each of the past four years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25384/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

Services for People with Disabilities

850. Deputy Paul Kehoe asked the Minister for Health when funding will be made available for a residential placement for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25419/18]

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 an individual case, I have arranged for the question to be

referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

Hospital Appointments Status

851. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will receive a hospital appointment. [25426/18]

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 Provision

852. Deputy Eugene Murphy asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) who has been waiting on a home care package for some months will be awarded same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25435/18]

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 Charges

853. Deputy Louise O'Reilly asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost of abolishing the €100 charge for the use of emergency departments; and the estimated cost of abolishing the €75 day charge for inpatient care. [25436/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In 2017, €27 million was raised through the statutory inpatient charge, and a further €17m was raised through the outpatient charge in the Acute Hospitals.

Therefore, it would cost approximately €44 million to abolish these charges.

Respite Care Services

854. Deputy Louise O'Reilly asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost of increasing respite care hours by 10%, in tabular form. [25437/18]

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.

Dental Services Expenditure

855. Deputy Louise O'Reilly asked the Minister for Health the funding for the public dental service in each of the years 2006 to 2017 and to date in 2018, in tabular form; his plans to increase this; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25438/18]

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.

Dental Services Expenditure

856. Deputy Louise O'Reilly asked the Minister for Health the annual expenditure on the public dental service in each of the years 2008 to 2017 and to date in 2018. [25439/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply to the Deputy.

Health Services Waiting Lists

857. Deputy Louise O'Reilly asked the Minister for Health the waiting lists for physiotherapy, occupational therapy and psychology services in north County Dublin by children and youth services and adult services in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25440/18]

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.

Dental Services Waiting Lists

858. Deputy Louise O'Reilly asked the Minister for Health the waiting lists for dentistry and orthodontic services in north County Dublin by children and youth services and adult services in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25441/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter it has been re-

ferred to the HSE for direct reply to the Deputy.

Orthodontic Services Waiting Lists

859. Deputy Louise O'Reilly asked the Minister for Health the number of children on the general waiting list for orthodontic diagnostics at Merlin Park, University Hospital Galway; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25442/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In relation to the query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

Orthodontic Services Waiting Lists

860. Deputy Louise O'Reilly asked the Minister for Health the number of children on the general waiting list for orthodontic diagnostics at University Hospital Galway due to the lack of a suitable dental X-ray machine in the radiography department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25443/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In relation to the query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

Orthodontic Services Data

861. Deputy Louise O'Reilly asked the Minister for Health the average waiting time for orthodontic treatment by HSE area in each of the years 2008 to 2017 and to date in 2018. [25444/18]

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.

Orthodontic Services Data

862. Deputy Louise O'Reilly asked the Minister for Health the funding for the Health Service Executive orthodontic service in each of the years 2006 to 2017 and to date in 2018, in tabular form; the estimated cost of extending the direct provision of orthodontic treatment to children with less severe needs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25445/18]

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.

Ambulance Service Data

863. Deputy Louise O'Reilly asked the Minister for Health the number of private ambulances operating; the hospital or hospital group they are working with; and the amount spent on private ambulances by hospital or hospital group in each of the years 2010 to 2017 and to date in 2018. [25446/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service issue, I have asked the

HSE to reply to you directly.

Health Services Data

864. Deputy Louise O'Reilly asked the Minister for Health the number of ultra sonographers operating in maternity hospitals by community hospital organisation and maternity hospital in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25447/18]

875. Deputy Louise O'Reilly asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost of ensuring that maternity hospitals have access to foetal anomaly screening with the requisite staff and equipment; and the estimated cost of employing additional sonographers and other personnel required for rolling out anomaly screening to each of the 19 maternity units. [25478/18]

907. Deputy Louise O'Reilly asked the Minister for Health the number of ultrasound machines in maternity hospitals by community health organisation and individual maternity hospital in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25518/18]

908. Deputy Louise O'Reilly asked the Minister for Health the age profile of every ultrasound machine in maternity hospitals by machine and maternity hospital in which it is located in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25519/18]

909. Deputy Louise O'Reilly asked the Minister for Health the number of ultrasound machines in maternity hospitals; the way in which this compares to the number required to meet the Birthrate Plus standard in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25520/18]

910. Deputy Louise O'Reilly asked the Minister for Health the number of ultra sonographers operating in maternity hospitals; the way in which this compares to the number required to meet the Birthrate Plus standard in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25521/18]

911. Deputy Louise O'Reilly asked the Minister for Health the number of foetal medicine experts operating in maternity hospitals; the way in which this compares to the number required to meet the Birthrate Plus standard in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25522/18]

912. Deputy Louise O'Reilly asked the Minister for Health the number of 20 week foetal anomaly scans carried out in maternity hospitals in each of the years 2010 to 2017 and to date in 2018, by community health organisation and individual maternity hospital in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25523/18]

913. Deputy Louise O'Reilly asked the Minister for Health the number of foetal medicine experts operating in maternity hospitals by community health organisation and individual maternity hospital in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25524/18]

915. Deputy Louise O'Reilly asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost of funding and implementing the national maternity strategy; and if a breakdown of spending costs will be provided. [25526/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 864, 875, 907 to 913, inclusive, and 915 together.

Implementation of Ireland's first National Maternity Strategy - Creating A Better Future Together 2016 - 2026 - is being led by the National Women & Infants Health Programme. To

this end, the Programme has developed a detailed Implementation Plan which I was pleased to launch in October 2017. The Plan is presented under the Strategy's four strategic priorities and details how each of the 77 actions will be implemented.

The Programme has estimated that full implementation will cost in the region of an additional €80 million revenue funding over the lifetime of the Strategy. Work to identify the precise capital funding requirement is ongoing. The Strategy will be implemented on a phased basis over the coming years and therefore the funding requirement will vary from year to year. In that context, the Implementation Plan will inform the annual Estimates process each year. I can confirm that additional funding of €4.15 million is being provided to the Programme this year for the Strategy.

The Strategy is very clear that all women must have equal access to ultrasound services and additional funding has been made available for that purpose. Indeed, one of the Programme's priorities for 2018 is to increase access to anomaly scans. I understand that the Programme has approved the appointment of an additional 28 ultrasonographers which was the total requirement identified to provide 100% access to anomaly scanning. The Programme is also working with the maternity networks to ensure foetal medicine expertise is available when an anomaly is identified.

In conclusion, I have asked the HSE to reply to you directly on your specific queries concerning maternity-related ultrasonography services and to provide a detailed breakdown of the 2018 €4.15 million allocation for the Strategy.

Services for People with Disabilities

865. Deputy Seamus Healy asked the Minister for Health the position regarding an assessment of needs for a child (details supplied) at HSE south Tipperary; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25449/18]

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 Recruitment

866. Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin asked the Minister for Health the number of speech and language therapists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists and psychologists required to eliminate waiting lists in accordance with the Disability Act 2005; and the estimated cost in this regard. [25466/18]

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 servic-

es 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

867. Deputy David Cullinane asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the case of a person (details supplied); the measures the HSE will undertake to ensure that the needs of the person and the wishes of their parents are met; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25467/18]

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.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services Staff

868. Deputy David Cullinane asked the Minister for Health the number of psychiatric consultants working within the child and adolescent mental health services, CAMHS, at University Hospital Waterford in each of the years 2015 to 2017 and to date in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25468/18]

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 Staff

869. Deputy David Cullinane asked the Minister for Health if there are vacant consultant posts associated with the child and adolescent mental health services, CAMHS, unit at University Hospital Waterford, UHW; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25469/18]

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 Data

870. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Health the number of children placed in an adult psychiatric ward at University Hospital Waterford, UHW, in each of the years 2016, 2017 and to date in 2018, by month in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25470/18]

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 Services

871. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Health if the expansion of a clinic at a hospital will be considered in view of the fact that it does not cater for all persons in County Donegal dependent on their condition (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25473/18]

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

Capital Expenditure Programme

872. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the committed capital spend for health in each of the years 2018 to 2024, in tabular form; and the projects on which it will be spent. [25475/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The capital funding for Health in the ten years of the National Development Plan 2018 to 2027 is €10.9 billion which provides the capital investment for a solid, ambitious plan which will improve our health services.

The National Development Plan outlines capital funding for the Health sector for the next five years (2018 to 2022).

National Development Plan	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Health Sector	€493m	€667m	€724m	€780m	€825m

The major priority Government projects currently in development comprise:

- the National Forensic Mental Health Services Hospital at Portrane,
- the new Children's Hospital along with the Paediatric Outpatient and Urgent Care Centres at Connolly and Tallaght Hospitals,
- the redevelopment of the National Rehabilitation Hospital Phase I
- the National Plan for Radiation Oncology at Cork University Hospital and University Hospital Galway,
- the Primary Care Centre Infrastructure Programme,
- the relocation of the National Maternity Hospital to the St Vincent's University Hospital campus,

Questions - Written Answers

- the long-term residential accommodation programmes for older people (Community Nursing Home Programme) and peoples with disabilities to address regulatory standards for accommodation.

Health capital projects and programmes currently under way will continue and these major priority projects will require the bulk of the notified capital allocation over the initial period of the Plan, 2018-2022.

It is important to recognise that this is a long-term plan, which will roll out over ten years and includes provision for a large number of developments across the country.

As is to be expected with a ten-year plan, many other proposals are at an early stage and, as with all capital development proposals, will require further appraisal, planning, design and tender before a firm timeline or funding required can be established.

The Health Service Executive's Capital Plan for 2018-2022 is currently the subject of discussions with the Department.

Hospital Beds Data

873. Deputy Louise O'Reilly asked the Minister for Health the capital cost of a hospital bed; the estimated fully absorbed cost of a hospital bed including staff, ancillary services and running costs; and the capital costs associated with opening new beds. [25476/18]

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.

Home Care Packages Expenditure

874. Deputy Louise O'Reilly asked the Minister for Health the spend on home care packages for 2018; and the estimated cost of increasing home care packages by 10% in one year based on current spend on home care packages. [25477/18]

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. 875 answered with Question No. 864.

Health Services Staff Data

876. Deputy Louise O'Reilly asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost of employing an advanced paramedic. [25479/18]

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

Home Help Service Expenditure

877. Deputy Louise O'Reilly asked the Minister for Health the estimated spend on home

help hours for 2018; and the estimated cost of increasing home help hours by 10% in one year based on current spend on home help. [25480/18]

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

Nursing Staff Recruitment

878. Deputy Louise O'Reilly asked the Minister for Health the estimated unit cost of hiring 100 nurses on an average nurse's pay grade. [25481/18]

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

Midwifery Services

879. Deputy Louise O'Reilly asked the Minister for Health the estimated unit cost of hiring 100 midwives on an average midwife's pay grade. [25482/18]

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

Occupational Therapy Staff

880. Deputy Louise O'Reilly asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost of hiring 100 occupational therapists on the average occupational therapist pay grade. [25483/18]

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

Speech and Language Therapy Staff

881. Deputy Louise O'Reilly asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost of hiring 100 speech and language therapists on the average position pay grade. [25484/18]

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

Dental Services Staff

882. Deputy Louise O'Reilly asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost of hiring ten dentists on the average dentist's pay grade. [25485/18]

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

Questions - Written Answers
Physiotherapy Provision

883. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost of hiring 100 physiotherapists on the average physiotherapist's pay grade. [25487/18]

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

Nursing Staff Data

884. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost of employing a staff nurse. [25488/18]

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

Occupational Therapy Staff

885. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost of employing an occupational therapist. [25489/18]

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

Speech and Language Therapy Staff

886. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost of employing a speech and language therapist. [25490/18]

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

Midwifery Services

887. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost of employing a midwife. [25491/18]

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

Health Services Staff Data

888. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost of employing an obstetrician or gynaecologist. [25492/18]

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

Health Services Staff Data

889. Deputy Louise O'Reilly asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost of employing a physiotherapist. [25493/18]

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

Health Services Staff Data

890. Deputy Louise O'Reilly asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost of employing a psychologist. [25494/18]

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

Health Services Staff Data

891. Deputy Louise O'Reilly asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost of employing a dietary technician. [25495/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne): I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly on this matter.

Health Services Staff Data

892. Deputy Louise O'Reilly asked the Minister for Health the estimated unit cost of hiring ten orthodontists on an average orthodontist's pay grade. [25496/18]

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

Ambulance Service Data

893. Deputy Louise O'Reilly asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost of purchasing, equipping and staffing 12 new ambulances. [25497/18]

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

Nursing Homes Support Scheme Data

894. Deputy Noel Grealish asked the Minister for Health the number of persons in Galway city and county receiving support under the nursing homes support scheme; the number that have a principal private residence included in their financial assessment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25499/18]

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

895. Deputy James Browne asked the Minister for Health the reason a person (details supplied) has yet to receive notice of a rescheduled appointment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25500/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The National Waiting List Management Policy, a standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, January 2014, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

Hospital Waiting Lists Data

896. Deputy Charlie McConalogue asked the Minister for Health the waiting times for surgery for hip and knee replacements after the initial outpatients consultation by an orthopaedic consultant in Letterkenny University Hospital, County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25502/18]

924. Deputy Charlie McConalogue asked the Minister for Health the waiting times to be seen by an orthopaedic consultant for an initial hip and knee consultation in Letterkenny University Hospital, County Donegal for routine and urgent referrals, respectively; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25554/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 896 and 924 together.

Improving waiting times for hospital procedures is a key commitment in the Programme for Government and in 2018 €50 million was allocated to the NTPF to provide treatment for patients.

The recently launched Inpatient/Day Case Action Plan outlines the combined impact of HSE and National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF) activity in 2018. The Action Plan includes a focus on orthopaedic patients with 800 of the 20,000 NTPF funded procedures planned for patients requiring hip/knee replacements.

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

Information provided by the NTPF (tables attached) set out (i) the Outpatient waiting list figures for patients awaiting an appointment to see an orthopaedic specialist/consultant at Letterkenny University Hospital; and (ii) waiting list figures for patients who have been placed on Inpatient/Daycase waiting list (post initial Outpatients consultation) for hip & knee replacements at Letterkenny University Hospital.

Sum of Count	Column Labels							
Row Labels	0-3 Months	3-6 Months	6-9 Months	9-12 Months	12-15 Months	15-18 Months	18+ Months	Grand Total
Revi-sion of total arthro-plasty of hip	1		1	2			1	5
Total arthro-plasty of hip, unilater-al	18	11	15	3	1	1	4	53
Total arthro-plasty of knee, unilater-al	20	8	6	2	1	2	4	43
Grand Total	39	19	22	7	2	3	9	101

The NTPF advise:

A hip/knee arthroplasty usually refers to a surgical replacement of the hip/knee joint with an artificial prosthesis.

A patient can be listed for one side i.e. a unilateral.

A patient can also be listed for a bilateral replacement i.e. the patient needs both hips replaced.

When a patient needs both hips replaced this can be done in a single hospital admission during one surgery i.e. the patient has only one anaesthetic (not all surgeons do this and not all patients are clinically

suitable for this option), or the patient can be treated by carrying out two separate operations.

Hospital Waiting Lists Data

897. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health if patients that have undergone bariatric surgery are entitled to a follow-up surgery to remove excess skin; the number of pa-

tients on the waiting list for assessment for skin removal surgery; the length of time they have been waiting; the number of patients that have been assessed and referred for this surgery awaiting treatment; the length of time they have been waiting; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25507/18]

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.

Health Services Provision

898. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the hospitals in which skin removal operations are carried out; and the medics who perform the procedure. [25508/18]

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.

Health Services Data

899. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the number of operations for the removal of excess skin following bariatric surgery that have been carried out in each of the past five years; the number that were carried out to date in 2018; and the number scheduled for the remainder of 2018. [25509/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond to the Deputy directly.

Health Services Provision

900. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health if it is HSE policy that patients requiring plastic surgery following cancer treatment are prioritised over patients requiring similar surgery following bariatric surgery. [25510/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): 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.

Public Health Policy

901. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health his plans to carry out a baseline health study in the Cork Harbour area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25512/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne): This is a mat-

ter for the HSE therefore I have referred the question to the HSE for attention and direct reply.

Proposed Legislation

902. Deputy Niall Collins asked the Minister for Health the status of the assisted human reproduction Bill; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25513/18]

938. Deputy Jan O'Sullivan asked the Minister for Health if the proposed legislation on assisted human reproduction will be passed by the end of 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25643/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 902 and 938 together.

The Government approved the drafting of a Bill on assisted human reproduction (AHR) and associated areas of research in October last year. The General Scheme is published on my Department's website. In addition, the Joint Committee on Health is currently conducting a review of the General Scheme of the Assisted Human Reproduction Bill 2017 as part of the pre-legislative scrutiny process, which began in January of this year.

The introduction of legislation in relation to AHR and associated research is a priority for me and officials in my Department are engaging with the Office of the Attorney General in relation to the process of drafting this Bill. However, it is not possible at this time to give a definitive timeline for the completion of the draft Bill and its subsequent passage through the Houses of the Oireachtas.

Patient Deaths

903. Deputy Niall Collins asked the Minister for Health the number of deaths which have occurred in the University Limerick Hospital, Dooradoyle, County Limerick while the patient was undergoing a procedure in each of the years 2010 to 2017 and to date in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25514/18]

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

Medical Negligence Cases

904. Deputy Niall Collins asked the Minister for Health the number of medical negligence legal actions taken against the State, him and individual medical or nursing staff who were or are based at the University Hospital Limerick, Dooradoyle, County Limerick in each of the years 2010 to 2017 and to date in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25515/18]

905. Deputy Niall Collins asked the Minister for Health the number of medical negligence legal actions taken against the State, the Minister for Health and individual medical or nursing staff who were or are based at the University Hospital Limerick, Dooradoyle, County Limerick in each of the years 2010 to 2017 and to date in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25516/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 904 and

905 together.

The management of clinical negligence claims arising from the diagnosis, treatment and care of patients in public healthcare enterprises is delegated to the State Claims Agency which has a statutory mandate to investigate and manage these cases to completion.

My officials have been advised by the Agency that it publishes risk and claims data at a national level and at a location level in an anonymised manner. This is to support the Agency's risk management objective to implement targeted personal injury and property damage risk work programmes to mitigate litigation risk in State authorities and healthcare enterprises, in order to reduce the costs of future litigation against the State.

The Agency does not release data pertaining to an individual location as it has the potential of identifying sensitive information relating to an individual. Also, such information can be taken out of context and may lead to an adverse impact on incident reporting rates within these locations. The Agency proactively supports the increase in incident reporting by a healthcare service as it is considered to be indicative of the development of a strong patient safety culture.

Hospital Waiting Lists

906. Deputy Peadar Tóibín asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 771 of 17 April 2018, the number of persons on the ENT waiting list at the Mater Hospital; the length of time they have been waiting; and the number waiting for treatment in each consecutive month [25517/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Improving waiting times for hospital procedures is a key commitment in the Programme for Government and in 2018 €50 million was allocated to the NTPF to provide treatment for patients.

The recently launched Inpatient/Day Case Action Plan outlines the combined impact of HSE and National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF) activity in 2018. Under the Plan, the NTPF will provide 20,000 treatments across a range of specialties and procedures. This will include provision of treatment to 1,200 patients requiring tonsillectomies.

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

Furthermore, the HSE is working with the NTPF and the Department of Health to finalise an Outpatient Waiting List Action Plan which will focus on improving overall use of resources and ensuring timely access to treatment and care for our patients.

The latest NTPF figures show that there are 353 patients on the active Inpatient/Daycase waiting list for ENT at the Mater Hospital, and of these 67% are waiting 9 months or less. The Outpatient waiting list for ENT for the Mater Hospital shows 3064 patients waiting and of these 51% of patients are waiting 9 months or less. The tables below provide a further breakdown of Mater Hospital ENT waiting lists.

Mater Misericordiae University Hospital – ENT Inpatient/Day Case Waiting List

Total	0-3 Months	3-6 Months	6-9 Months	9-12 Months	12-15 Months	15-18 Months	Total 18+ Months
353	111	76	49	40	28	26	23

Mater Misericordiae University Hospital – ENT Outpatient Waiting List

Total	0-3 Months	3-6 Months	6-9 Months	9-12 Months	12-15 Months	15-18 Months	Total 18+ Months
3064	663	463	439	419	361	320	399

Questions Nos. 907 to 913, inclusive, answered with Question No. 864.

Information and Communications Technology

914. Deputy Louise O'Reilly asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost of increasing the HSE information technology budget to bring it to the EU and OECD averages, respectively; the estimated cost of increasing the HSE information technology budget by an average of 2%; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25525/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): ICT spending is composed of Capital and Revenue but excludes staff costs. Please note that international comparisons on information technology expenditure are difficult for a variety of reasons due to the different health system arrangements across European and OECD countries. The 2018 national service plan set out an overall budget of over €14.5 billion for the HSE of which a 2% increase on the current level of HSE capital ICT spending would indicate an capital investment figure of €290m being made available. Additional investment in eHealth and ICT was secured for the period 2018-2021 as part of the Mid-Term Capital Review. The capital provision for eHealth and ICT for 2018 to 2021 is set out in the table below and will allow for a multi-annual rolling programme of work on multiple projects including the capital ICT elements of the New Children's Hospital.

2018	2019	2020	2021
€60m	€85m	€100m	€120m

Question No. 915 answered with Question No. 864.

General Practitioner Services

916. Deputy Louise O'Reilly asked the Minister for Health if the estimate of the cost of introducing free general practitioner care for all persons was between €330 million and €365 million, excluding those younger than six and older than 70 years of age; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25527/18]

917. Deputy Louise O'Reilly asked the Minister for Health the estimated costs of introducing free general practitioner care to all persons based on the current scope, fee structure and payments to general practitioners; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25528/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 916 and 917 together.

GMS contractors receive a range of capitation rates, fee per service payments and practice supports. It is not possible to definitively calculate the cost of universal GP access given the wide range of payments and variables that have to be accounted for.

Such a calculation would require a complex and detailed modelling exercise to account for a range of demographic changes, future projections of service demands and variation in the number of GPs and the allowances that could be paid.

The Deputy will be aware that the Report of the Committee on the Future of Healthcare was published in May 2017 and recommended the phased introduction of universal GP care over the next five years through increased income thresholds.

The research carried out for that paper estimated the cost of this approach at €91 million per year for five years for a total additional annual cost of €455m. However, these figures have not been verified and given the time that has elapsed since this research was conducted could under-estimate the cost of this proposal.

As the Deputy is aware, an implementation plan is being developed in response to the Sláintecare report. This implementation plan will be comprehensive and it will set out a programme of health reform for the coming years, addressing this and other recommendations in the Sláintecare report. I expect to bring this implementation plan to Government in the coming weeks.

Medical Card Data

918. Deputy Louise O'Reilly asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost of awarding medical cards for all adults with disabilities. [25529/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In relation to the cost of medical card provision to all persons with a disability that do not currently qualify it is noted that the data required to model this is not available and it is therefore not possible to produce an estimate of the cost of such a proposal.

Medical card provision is primarily based on financial assessment. In accordance with the provisions of the Health Act 1970 (as amended), eligibility for a medical card is determined by the HSE. The Act obliges the HSE to assess whether a person is unable, without due hardship, to arrange general practitioner services for himself or herself and his or her family, having regard to his or her overall financial position and reasonable expenditure and every application must be assessed on that basis. Under the legislation, having a particular illness, in itself, does not establish eligibility for a medical card. Where the applicant's income is within the income guidelines, a medical card or GP visit card will be awarded.

Every effort is made by the HSE, within the framework of the legislation, to support applicants in applying for a medical card and, in particular, to take full account of the difficult circumstances in the case of applicants who may be in excess of the income guidelines. The HSE may exercise discretion and grant a medical card, even though an applicant exceeds his or her income threshold, where he or she faces difficult financial circumstances, such as extra costs arising from an illness. Social and medical issues are considered when determining whether undue hardship exists for an individual accessing general practitioner or other medical services. The HSE affords applicants the opportunity to furnish supporting information documentation to fully take account of all the relevant circumstances that may benefit them in the assessment, including medical evidence of cost and necessary expenses.

Prescriptions Charges

919. Deputy Louise O'Reilly asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost of abolishing

prescription charges; the estimated cost of the phased abolition of charges by 50 cent; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25530/18]

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.

Emergency Departments Waiting Times

920. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the emergency department waiting times greater than 24 hours for persons over 75 years of age in 2018; if the targets were met; if not, the number of persons over 75 years of age who have had a wait of more than 24 hours in an emergency department in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25531/18]

921. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons aged 75 years of age or over who experienced an emergency department waiting time of more than 24 hours in 2017 and to date in 2018; the hospital in which this occurred by month; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25532/18]

922. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health if the HSE target of eliminating emergency department waiting times of greater than 24 hours for persons over 75 years of age was met for 2018; the number of persons over 75 years of age who have had to wait for more than 24 hours in an emergency department in 2018; the hospital in which the wait occurred in each case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25533/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 920 to 922, inclusive, together.

The HSE National Service Plan 2018 requires that no patient over 75 should be waiting more than 24 hours in an Emergency Department (ED).

Initial year-to-date HSE data for April (which is still to be fully validated by the HSE) indicates that at the end of April 2018 over 88% of patients over 75 presenting in ED's nationally met this target. This equates to a total of 6,166 patients who waited longer than 24 hours in this period.

The HSE data for 2017 shows a full year compliance with this target of 92.4%. To note in relation to the particular query raised, I have also asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly with the most recent validated figures.

HSE data in relation to Patient Experience Time (PET) for all patients and specifically those over 75 is publically available on the HSE website at the following address:

www.hse.ie/eng/services/publications/performancereports/

The Government is, and will continue to, provide increased resources to alleviate the pressure on EDs in the face of rising demand.

Medical Aids and Appliances Provision

923. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health when a child (details supplied) in County Cork will receive a special needs wheelchair. [25535/18]

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.

Question No. 924 answered with Question No. 896.

Medicinal Products Reimbursement

925. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons (details supplied) who have applied to the scheme since the FreeStyle Libre sensor approval for young persons between four to 21 years of age under the reimbursement scheme; the number who have been approved since 3 April 2018 when the product was approved; the information given to type 1 diabetics regarding the product; the reason he has not approved the product for all type 1 diabetics when the product is tested and proven to be cost effective (details supplied). [25555/18]

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.

Departmental Funding

926. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Health his Department's capital allocation in each of the years 2019 to 2023; and the areas to which funds will be allocated in each of those years. [25573/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The capital funding for Health in the ten years of the National Development Plan 2018 to 2027 is €10.9 billion which provides the capital investment for a solid, ambitious plan which will improve our health services.

The National Development Plan outlines capital funding for the Health sector for the next five years (2018 to 2022).

National Development Plan	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Health Sector	€493m	€667m	€724m	€780m	€825m

The major priority Government projects currently in development comprise:

the National Forensic Mental Health Services Hospital at Portrane, the new Children's Hospital along with the Paediatric Outpatient and Urgent Care Centres at Connolly and Tallaght Hospitals,

the redevelopment of the National Rehabilitation Hospital Phase I

the National Plan for Radiation Oncology at Cork University Hospital and University Hospital Galway,

the Primary Care Centre Infrastructure Programme,

the relocation of the National Maternity Hospital to the St Vincent's University Hospital campus,

the long-term residential accommodation programmes for older people (Community Nursing Home Programme) and peoples with disabilities to address regulatory standards for accommodation.

Health capital projects and programmes currently underway will continue and these major priority projects will require the bulk of the notified capital allocation over the initial period of the Plan, 2018-2022.

It is important to recognise that this is a long-term plan, which will roll out over ten years and includes provision for a large number of developments across the country.

As is to be expected with a ten-year plan, many other proposals are at an early stage and, as with all capital development proposals, will require further appraisal, planning, design and tender before a firm timeline or funding required can be established.

The Health Service Executive's Capital Plan for 2018-2022 is currently the subject of discussions with the Department.

Question No. 927 answered with Question No. 659.

Medicinal Products Reimbursement

928. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Health if it is accurate to state that patients wait an average of 348 days for a drug to be approved for public funding and in some cases over four years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25581/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The HSE has statutory responsibility for medicine pricing and reimbursement decisions, in accordance with the 2013 Act. The Act specifies the criteria for decisions on the reimbursement of medicines.

The 2013 Act does not give the Minister for Health any powers in this regard. The HSE does not require approval or consent from the Minister or Government when making a reimbursement decision.

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 works with the objective of within 180 days of receiving the application (or a longer period if further information is sought from the company), either:

adding the medicine to the reimbursement list or agreeing to reimburse it as a hospital medicine,

refusing to reimburse the medicine.

The HSE strives to reach a decision in as timely a manner as possible and within the 180 days. 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, especially when the price sought by a manufacturer poses a very significant affordability challenge.

I am keen to explore ways in which new medicines might be more easily introduced in Ireland. However, any innovative approaches that may be tabled must be compatible with the statutory provisions which are in place and must also recognise the context of finite Exchequer resources.

HSE Reports

929. Deputy John Lahart asked the Minister for Health the reason for the delay in publishing the HSE performance report for quarters in 2017 and to date in 2018. [25584/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The publication of the HSE performance reports was delayed pending finalisation of the HSE's 2017 Annual Financial Statements (AFS). The Department was engaging with the HSE to clarify the reported financial position and its impact on the AFS and the first charge. This process has now been completed and the AFS has been signed off by the Comptroller and Auditor General. I intend to lay a copy of the 2017 HSE Annual Report and Financial Statements before the House of the Oireachtas shortly.

Publication of the performance reports will now proceed. I expect that the 2017 quarter four report will be published imminently and the 2018 first quarter report will be published by the end of June.

Emergency Departments Staff

930. Deputy Thomas P. Broughan asked the Minister for Health the reason no general practitioners will be located in the accident and emergency department of Beaumont Hospital, Dublin 9 after midnight; his plans to extend general practitioner access in this department after midnight; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25599/18]

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 Data

931. Deputy Seán Crowe asked the Minister for Health the length of time a person (details supplied) is awaiting a dermatologist appointment in Tallaght University Hospital; if the waiting time is usual or excessive; the waiting time to see a dermatologist in the hospital; the number of persons awaiting an appointment with a dermatologist; the steps being taken to alleviate the waiting times; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25601/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Improving waiting times for hospital procedures and outpatient appointments is a key commitment in the Programme for Government.

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.

A number of steps are being taken to ensure the lists are accurate and these efforts are to intensify in the coming months. The HSE is working with the NTPF and my Department to finalise an Outpatient Waiting List Action Plan focused on improving overall use of resources and ensuring timely access to treatment and care for our patients.

According to the latest NTPF figures, there are currently 2868 on the Dermatology Outpatient waiting list for Tallaght Hospital and of these 47% are waiting 9 months or less. See table below for breakdown of waiting times.

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

Total	0-3 Months	3-6 Months	6-9 Months	9-12 Months	12-15 Months	15-18 Months	Total 18+ Months
2868	672	380	293	311	250	271	691

Hospital Appointments Status

932. Deputy Timmy Dooley asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) in County Clare will receive a consultant's appointment at University Hospital Limerick; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25602/18]

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 Review

933. Deputy Aindrias Moynihan asked the Minister for Health when proposed changes in the fair deal scheme outlined in the media in February 2018 will be implemented; the full extent of these changes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25604/18]

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

At present, the capital value of an individual's principal private residence is only included in

the financial assessment for the first three years of their time in care. This is known as the three year cap. This cap does not apply to productive assets such as farms and businesses except in cases of sudden illness or disability where specific conditions are met.

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

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

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

Hospital Appointments Status

934. Deputy Michael Healy-Rae asked the Minister for Health to set out the status of a hospital appointment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25616/18]

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.

Care Services Provision

935. Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly asked the Minister for Health to outline his plans to expand a pilot course for family carers of those with life limiting illnesses; the expected timeline for this expansion; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25621/18]

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 Expenditure

936. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 810 of 16 January 2018 if he will request the HSE to provide the information requested (details supplied). [25622/18]

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

937. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the case of a person (details supplied) who is awaiting assessment for surgery to remove excess skin following bariatric surgery; when they will be called for an assessment; and if necessary, when further surgery will be scheduled. [25624/18]

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.

Question No. 938 answered with Question No. 902.

Hospital Appointments Status

939. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) can expect an appointment. [25659/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The National Waiting List Management Policy, a standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, January 2014, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to

respond to the Deputy directly.

Mental Health Services Staff

940. Deputy Fergus O'Dowd asked the Minister for Health to set out the number of employees in the mental health service by location and grade in counties Louth and Meath; the number of vacancies in both counties by grade and location; the efforts that have been made to recruit staff; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25660/18]

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 Products Supply

941. Deputy Róisín Shortall asked the Minister for Health to outline the position regarding the free supply of medicines by pharmaceutical companies to public hospitals; the extent to which this is happening; the guidelines which exist in respect of same; and his views on the appropriateness of such arrangements. [25711/18]

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

Hospital Staff

942. Deputy Róisín Shortall asked the Minister for Health to set out the status of the actions which have been taken following the serious issues raised in the media (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25712/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): My Department is working closely with the HSE to ensure compliance by all consultants with the private practice provisions of Consultant Contract 2008.

Senior officials representing the Department and the HSE met on 23 March to finalise measures to ensure that a comprehensive robust framework at national and local level be implemented.

Actions agreed include:-

- the allocation of individual responsibilities for monitoring and managing the compliance of individual consultants within the framework at local, Hospital group and national levels,
- processes for monthly reporting from Hospital Group CEOs to the National Director for Acute Hospitals with quarterly reporting to the Deputy Director General and escalation if required,
- the inclusion of consultant contract compliance in the work programme of the HSE's Audit Committee, and
- the submission of reports to the Department of the position at the end of September 2018, the end of December 2018 and annually thereafter.

I have emphasised to the HSE the need to ensure that all necessary measures are taken to ensure that compliance is achieved on an ongoing basis and corrective action taken where necessary.

EU Data

943. Deputy Michael McGrath asked the Minister for Health to set out in tabular form the EU fines paid in each of the years 2015 to 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25734/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Department of Health paid zero in fines in each of these 3 years.

Year	2015	2016	2017
Amount Fined	€0	€0	€0

Fishery Harbour Centres

944. Deputy Pearse Doherty asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine to outline the details of the commitment to develop Greencastle Harbour, County Donegal as outlined in Project Ireland 2040; if this commitment involves the completion of the breakwater beside the harbour; when these development works will commence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24973/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Greencastle Harbour is owned by Donegal County Council and responsibility for its maintenance and development rests with that Local Authority in the first instance and its parent Department, the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government thereafter.

My Department owns, operates and maintains six designated State-owned Fishery Harbour Centres, located at Castletownbere, Dingle, Dunmore East, Howth, Killybegs and Ros An Mhíl under statute. In addition, my Department also has responsibility for the upkeep and maintenance of North Harbour at Cape Clear, as well as the maintenance of a small number of specific piers, lights and beacons throughout Ireland, in accordance with the 1902 ex-congested Districts Board piers, lights and Beacons Act.

As indicated, my legislative remit does not extend to Greencastle Harbour, and given that the ownership of, and overall responsibility for Greencastle Harbour rests with the County Council, it is the Council who will decide if it wishes to carry out any further development, repair or maintenance of the Greencastle Harbour.

When Donegal County Council decides on the exact programme of works they wish to carry out and the costing and timescale for those works and notify their full intentions in this respect, the matter can be considered further in the context of Government priorities.

Independently, my Department provides limited funding to assist coastal Local Authorities in carrying out small scale projects for the development and repair of Local Authority owned piers, harbours and slipways under the annual Fishery Harbour and Coastal Infrastructure Development Programme, subject to available Exchequer funding and overall national priorities.

Donegal County Council successfully secured the maximum funding allocation allowable of €112,500 under the 2017 Programme for development works at Greencastle Harbour. An

application for funding in respect of safety signage at Greencastle Harbour was made to my Department under the 2018 Programme and €9,000 has been approved for this purpose.

Any applications submitted by Donegal County Council in relation to Greencastle Harbour in the future will be given due consideration in the context of the criteria set out, available Exchequer funding and overall national priorities.

Herd Data

945. Deputy Dara Calleary asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine to outline the criteria for attaining a herd number; if these criteria differ in cases in which a new farmer is trying to reactivate a herd number; if there are circumstances in which the farmer can attain the herd number in the absence of a cattle crush; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24239/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): In order to obtain a herdnumber an ER1 application form should be completed. There are terms attaching to the provision of a herdnumber including that the applicant must be an individual over 18 years of age. Form ER1 and further details are available online on my Department's website www.agriculture.gov.ie or directly from the relevant Regional Veterinary Office.

In all cases, when a herd number is being reactivated the applicant should speak to my Department officials in the relevant Regional Veterinary Office.

Any new applicant is required to abide by all of the regulations governing the issue of a herdnumber, animal health and welfare regulations and animal movement and identification regulations, details of which are set out in the ER1 application form.

An on farm inspection is usually required to attain a herdnumber for the keeping of animals, adequate handling facilities among other areas form part of this inspection. My Department officials will discuss with any applicant the details of their application and these requirements.

Animal Identification Schemes

946. Deputy Mick Wallace asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine to set out in tabular form the number of checks carried out in compliance with SI 62 of 2016 and the requirement to possess a horse passport in each year since 2016; and the number of instances of non-compliance identified in each year. [24248/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): S.I. 62/2016 transposing Regulation EU 262/2015 lays down rules regarding the methods for the identification of horses within the EU. It also deals with the issuance of equine identification documents, as well as the movement and transport of equines. The DAFM website carries extensive information to assist horse owners and keepers in achieving compliance with the requirements of the legislation. Checks on horse passports are undertaken through my Department's Regional Office network. My officials attend gatherings of horses such as fairs where large numbers of horses are shown or traded. The checks are generally carried out as part of a multi-agency task force e.g in liaison with the Local Authorities and An Garda Síochána.

Consolidated records are not collated in regard to these checks, and any matters arising are dealt with as appropriate at Regional Office level.

Where suspected cases of unidentified equines arise, my officials will liaise closely with the Local Authorities and An Garda Síochána as appropriate.

Farm Sizes

947. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine to outline his views on supports for farmers that are purchasing land to consolidate their farm holdings and incentives that can be introduced; when these would have effect with regard to the cost of such consolidation and the position on State levies that may apply; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24258/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Capital Gains Tax Relief for Farm Restructuring provides for a rollover relief for farm restructuring and parcel swaps, with certain conditions, to ensure more efficient farm holdings. Initially introduced in 2013 only for individual land parcels, a subsequent change sought by my Department now allows for whole-farm replacement and an extended timeframe for the first transaction to occur. To be eligible for the relief, the sale and purchase of qualifying land(s) must occur within 24 months of each other. Relief is only available to claimants who are issued with a Farm Restructuring Certificate by Teagasc.

As part of Budget 2018, I introduced a Stamp Duty Relief for Farm Consolidation. This relief is part of a package of measures I agreed with the Minister for Finance following the increase of the general stamp duty rate in the last Budget.

Both reliefs are important environmentally and economically for farmers seeking to consolidate fragmented holdings.

Basic Payment Scheme

948. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if a basic farm payment will be awarded to a farmer (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24275/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The person named applied under the Scottish Derogation Scheme in 2015 for an allocation of entitlements. This application was initially deemed as unsuccessful. This unsuccessful status has not changed following an internal appeal and also an appeal to the independent Agriculture Appeals Office.

As previously advised by the Agriculture Appeal's Office, the person named may further raise the matter with the Office of the Ombudsman if they feel they have been unfairly treated in the matter of the most recent appeal.

GLAS Administration

949. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine to outline his plans to reopen the GLAS scheme; if not, the reason therefor; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24294/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The target set out in the Rural Development Programme 2014 - 2020 to approve 50,000 GLAS partici-

pants before the end of 2018 has already been achieved. The fact that the RDP target has been achieved almost two years ahead of schedule is a significant achievement on the part of both farmers and my Department and is evidence of the commitment of Irish farmers to the sustainable growth of the Irish agri-food sector into the future.

The GLAS scheme is one of a suite of many RDP schemes and the re-opening of any scheme can only be considered within the overall RDP budget which is currently fully committed. There are no plans to re-open the scheme. My focus now is on managing the participation of those approved into the Scheme.

Water Quality

950. Deputy Charlie McConalogue asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine to set out the 2018 funding allocation to the sustainability support and advisory programme by project costs and staff costs; and if the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government's €1 million annual allocation as per Parliamentary Question No. 496 of 8 May 2018 constitutes a separate allocation to the programme. [24330/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The 'Sustainability Support and Advisory Programme' is an innovative Government/ industry collaborative initiative and a new approach to achieving improvements in water quality and wider sustainability. It involves the establishment and joint funding between my Department, the Department of Housing, Planning & Local Government (DHPLG) and the Dairy Industry of a resource of 30 Agricultural Sustainability Advisors.

20 of these advisors are being jointly funded by my Department and the DHPLG.

The total projected pro rata costs for 2018 for the Government funded advisors is €817,000; this is being jointly financed by my Department and DHPLG.

GLAS Payments

951. Deputy Michael Healy-Rae asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine to set out the status of a farm payment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24346/18]

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 in respect of scheme years 2015 and 2016 including GLAS plus.

This applicant has not yet submitted the required Commonage Management Plan and is therefore ineligible for further payments. Both the participant and their advisor have been advised of the requirement to submit the Plan immediately to ensure further payments and indeed participation in the scheme.

GLAS Payments

952. Deputy Michael Healy-Rae asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine to set out the status of a GLAS payment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24393/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The person named was approved into GLAS 2 with a contract commencement date of 1 January 2016 and has received all payments in respect of scheme year 2016 including GLAS plus.

This applicant has not yet submitted the required Commonage Management Plan and is therefore ineligible for payments. Both the participant and their advisor have been advised of the requirement to submit the Plan immediately to ensure further payments and indeed participation in the scheme.

GLAS Payments

953. Deputy Martin Kenny asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will address a matter regarding an ongoing information technology issue in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24404/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The above named was approved into GLAS 3 with a contract commencement date of 1 January 2017.

This Commonage Management Plan has now been submitted. Validation checks will continue on the application and payment will issue as soon as these are successfully completed. GLAS payments are currently issuing on a weekly basis.

GLAS Applications

954. Deputy Michael Healy-Rae asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of a farm payment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24405/18]

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 in respect of scheme years 2015 and 2016 including GLAS plus.

This applicant has not yet submitted the required Commonage Management Plan and is therefore ineligible for further payments. Both the participant and their advisor have been advised of the requirement to submit the Plan immediately to ensure further payments and indeed participation in the scheme.

Forest Roads Scheme

955. Deputy Michael Healy-Rae 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. [24420/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Approval for the construction of a forest road was issued to the person named on 01/11/2017 by the Department. In accordance with the terms and conditions of the grant scheme, payment of the forest road grant is subject to the submission of a fully completed and signed Form 2 (Application for Payment) as well as required supporting documentation. The detailed requirements are outlined in the Forest Road Scheme Document. In accordance with the contract issued, payment is also conditional on the satisfactory completion of the works not later than 30/06/2018.

To date, a Form 2 has not been received by the Department from the person named.

Agriculture Scheme Payments

956. Deputy Clare Daly asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if a foal may be registered without the foal levy being paid. [24448/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The current Foal Levy Scheme, which was introduced in 2000 on a statutory basis, applies to all thoroughbred foals registered in Ireland. The foal levy is currently calculated with reference to SI 735 of 2011 which is the governing legislation.

The statutory scheme requires the owner of each thoroughbred foal born in Ireland, requiring registration, to register in the General Stud Book through the offices of Weatherbys Ireland GSB Limited and pay at registration time a levy to Horse Racing Ireland. The actual levy payable is related to the generally applicable (advertised) nomination fee of the foal's sire and varies between €35 (where the nomination fee is less than €1,001) and €650 (where the nomination fee is in excess of €30,001).

Horse Racing Ireland is a commercial State body responsible for the overall administration, promotion and development of the horse racing industry

Horse Racing Ireland

957. Deputy Clare Daly asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of court cases taken by Horse Racing Ireland since the foal levy was introduced seeking recovery of unpaid foal levy charges. [24449/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Horse Racing Ireland is a commercial State Body responsible for the overall administration, promotion and development of the horse racing industry.

I have made enquiries with Horse Racing Ireland and have been informed that court proceedings were issued in 20 cases and five of these cases are ongoing.

Animal Slaughtering Data

958. Deputy Peter Burke asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of kilos of beef killed per week in all factories and abattoirs here. [24496/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): In 2017 there was a total of 586,182,300 Kg's of beef slaughtered in all factories and abattoirs. This is on average 11,272,737 Kg's per week. (See table below for breakdown)

Beef that is slaughtered in meat factories is categorised as follows:

A – Young Bull (<24 months)

B – Mature Bull (>24 months)

C- Steer

D- Cow

E- Heifer

The average weights are taken from Price reporting abattoirs (24) and the total numbers slaughtered is a total of all Department of Agriculture controlled factories and local authority controlled abattoirs.

- 2017	A	B	C	D	E	Total
Numbers Slaughtered	196,835	28,203	684,592	375,362	553,806	
Average Weight	365	450	354	314	312	
Kg's	71,610,533	12,683,042	240,971,730	117,323,611	143,593,384	586,182,300
Weeks / year	52	52	52	52	52	52
Kg's / Week	1,377,126	243,905	4,634,072	2,256,223	2,761,411	11,272,737

Herd Data

959. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of recorded calf births in suckler herds from 1 June 2015 to date in 2018, by year in tabular form. [24497/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The number of recorded calf births in suckler herds from 1 June 2015 to 31 May 2018 is set down on a calendar year basis in the following table.

Birth Year	Period	Registrations
2015	1 June 2015 - 31 December 2015	321,863
2016	1 January 2016 - 31 December 2016	976,078
2017	1 January 2016 - 31 December 2017	944,166
2018	1 January 2018 - 31 May 2018	568,929

The number of births registered in 2018 is not a true representation of calf births in May 2018 as a calf may be registered up to 27 days after birth and accordingly a number of births in May 2018 will be registered in June 2018.

Young Farmers Scheme Eligibility

960. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason a person (details supplied) has not received a once a year young farmers payment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24532/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The person named submitted an application to my Department for continued participation in the Young Farmers Scheme (YFS). The EU Regulations governing the YFS require my Department to carry out inspections to ensure compliance with the scheme eligibility criteria.

The 2017 YFS application of the person named was selected for inspection. This inspection was carried out on 28 March 2018 and it identified that the person named did not meet the scheme criteria in relation to being in financial control of the holding.

The initial findings of the inspection were notified on 9 May 2018 and the person named was afforded the opportunity to submit comments on the findings. Comments were submitted by the person named and these were examined and the final outcome of the inspection, which upheld the original inspection findings, was notified by letter of 30 May 2018. This letter advised the person named that they could seek a review of this decision by submitting new facts or fresh evidence with supporting documents, within 28 days of the date of this letter. My Department has no record of receiving a review request at this time.

If the person named is dissatisfied with the outcome of any such review, the decision can be appealed to the independent Agriculture Appeals Office, within 3 months.

Programme for Government Implementation

961. Deputy Micheál Martin asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of the implementation of A Programme for a Partnership Government as it applies to his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24569/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The Government will shortly be publishing the second annual progress report on the Programme for Partnership Programme. Some of my Department's highlights for year two are:

Food Wise 2025: Total agri-food exports in 2017 were €13.6bn, an increase of 11% over 2016. Among the achievements in market access included the opening of the Chinese market for beef and that Irish beef sold in the US can now carry the USDA quality mark.

Sustainability: Under the Rural Development Programme, the GLAS (some 50,000 farmers participating), BDGP (some 25,000 farmers participating) and TAMS programmes have all continued to make real contributions to the common goal of Irish sustainability. To date, 337 food and drink companies are verified members of Origin Green.

Brexit: Preparations, including close engagement with stakeholders, are continuing and I provided €50million in supports in Budget 2018. I have also been engaged in an intensified round of bilateral meetings with other Member States.

Access to finance: Following the successful €145 million 'Agriculture Cashflow Loan Scheme' in 2017, I and my colleagues launched a new €300 million 'Brexit Loan Scheme' for Brexit-impacted SMEs and mid-caps. My Department's funding ensures that at least 40% of the fund will be available to food businesses.

Payments: Advance payments of €704 million issued to over 111,000 applicants on the earliest date permissible under EU regulations (16 October), with balancing payments commenced again on the earliest possible date, bringing the total paid to €1.106 billion to 120,700 (98% of all eligible applications). The application process for the 2018 Basic Payment Scheme opened on the 7 February 2018, which is the earliest the application process has opened and is over a month ahead of the opening of the 2017 application process. This is to provide additional time for farmers and their agents to submit their application online as, under EU regulations, all applications must be submitted online in 2018.

New CAP: Following on from the European Commission's public consultation on CAP in

early 2017, and the CAP Communication on 29 November 2017, my Department commenced its own public consultation on CAP post 2020 with six public meetings, which Minister of State Doyle and I hosted during February 2018. The public meetings were held regionally throughout the country and were well attended. The submissions are now available on my Department's website. The Commission published its proposals on 1 June.

Trade: In the past year, I led successful trade missions to the USA & Mexico, to Japan & South Korea, Turkey, the USA & Canada and China & Japan. I travelled to the UK as part of the annual series of Irish Government engagements to mark St Patrick's Day, especially significant in the context of Brexit.

Forestry: Increases in afforestation grant and premium rates have been introduced as part of the *Forestry Programmes* midterm review. A series of promotion activities have been undertaken to highlight forestry as a land use option for farmers.

National Farm Animal Health Strategy: I launched The National Farmed Animal Health Strategy 2017-22 in July 2017. The Strategy sets out a comprehensive set of actions for all stakeholders in the agri-food industry to work in partnership to achieve optimal animal health in Ireland.

Seafood: Seafood exports to 72 countries increased by 16% in 2017 to €645 million. Some €28 million was invested in Ireland's seafood sector through a suite of 16 schemes under the EMFF Operational Programme.

GLAS Appeals

962. Deputy Charlie McConalogue asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of an appeal by a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24588/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The above named was approved into GLAS 3 with a contract commencement date of 1 January 2017.

An issue presented with the application during the prepayment validation checks and an action was rejected from the application. As this was the only Tier 1 action on the application the entire application was rejected. A review of this decision was requested and the above named has been informed in writing that the review was unsuccessful, setting out the option of submitting an appeal to the Agriculture Appeals Office.

Young Farmers Scheme

963. Deputy Kevin O'Keeffe asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if a payment will be issued in respect of 2017 to a farmer (details supplied) in County Cork who has submitted the necessary documentation under the specific scheme. [24748/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The person named submitted an application to my Department for continued participation in the Young Farmers Scheme (YFS). The EU Regulations governing the YFS require my Department to carry out inspections to ensure compliance with the scheme eligibility criteria.

The 2017 YFS application of the person named was selected for inspection. This inspection was carried out on 22 March 2018 and it identified that the person named did not meet the

scheme eligibility criteria in relation to being in financial control of the holding.

The initial findings of the inspection were notified on 18 April 2018 and the person named was afforded the opportunity to submit comments on the findings. Comments were submitted by the person named and these were examined and the final outcome of the inspection, which upheld the original inspection findings, was notified by letter of 25 May 2018. This letter advised the person named that they could seek a review of this decision by submitting new facts or fresh evidence with supporting documents, within 28 days of the date of this letter. My Department has no record of receiving a review request at this time.

If the person named is dissatisfied with the outcome of any such review, the decision can be appealed to the independent Agriculture Appeals Office, within three months.

Aquaculture Regulation

964. Deputy Clare Daly asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason fish from a company's (detail supplied) hatchery at Lough Altan, County Donegal has been awarded organic status despite the fact that his Department determined that the company had breached licence conditions at the hatchery. [24752/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): In the case referred, I determined that a breach of the general aquaculture licence conditions did occur. However, I also determined that the circumstances were such that the licence itself should not be revoked in this instance.

With regard to the organic status of the operation, which is subject to a separate approval process, the relevant Organic Control Body undertook a comprehensive audit of all sites operated by the company in question earlier this year. This found that the specific requirements governing organic production were being complied with.

That said, and as with the performance of all operators, my Department is keeping the matter under close review to ensure that the highest standards are maintained.

Fish Farming

965. Deputy Clare Daly asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his views on whether the procedures operated by his Department for organic designation of salmon farms are so flawed that the organic label is nothing more than a greenwash marketing tactic for inducing the public to pay higher prices for farmed salmon. [24753/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): At the outset, I wish to make very clear that the procedures operated by my Department are designed to ensure that the highest standards apply to all areas of Irish organic production. The award of organic status is secured by a formal certification process delegated by my Department to various Organic Control Bodies in accordance with the relevant EU regulations. The certification process involves regular inspection of all organic operators, production techniques and sampling of organic produce to ensure compliance with all EU requirements.

The inspection process for producers of organic salmon is extremely detailed and includes adherence to a range of core organic principles, as well as stocking levels, feeding practice, caging standards, traceability and fish-welfare & husbandry amongst other things. Organic aquaculture sites are also subject to the standard inspection regime applying to conventional produc-

ers by the Marine Institute and the Sea Fisheries Protection Authority. In addition, all Organic Control Bodies are independently accredited by an external accreditation body.

In 2016, the certification system for organic salmon in Ireland was included in a comprehensive audit by the EU of the controls applied by Ireland in the Organic Sector generally. The EU audit team made some recommendations which have been implemented and which further strengthened our control system across the board. I am satisfied therefore that the integrity of the organic label in Ireland is fully intact.

Fish Farming

966. Deputy Clare Daly asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if the failure of a salmon farm operator to notify his Department of an outbreak of disease as required by the licence conditions would preclude that operator from holding the organic status label. [24754/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Organic operators are required to implement systems to manage health and disease outbreaks in accordance with governing regulations. Such operators are also required to notify their relevant Organic Control Body of disease outbreaks including notification of treatments of stock.

Depending on the circumstances, any breach of such requirements may possibly impact on the organic certification of an organic operator. However, such breaches would have to be assessed on a case by case basis by the Organic Control Body in the first instance.

Organic Farming

967. Deputy Clare Daly asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his views on whether the policy oversight and management of the organic labelling system should be transferred to a body that is independent of his Department in view of the many failures of his Department to properly regulate the organic labelling system. [24755/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): At the outset, I wish to make very clear that the procedures operated by my Department are designed to ensure that the highest standards apply to all areas of Irish organic production. The award of organic status is secured by a formal certification process delegated by my Department to various Organic Control Bodies in accordance with the relevant EU regulations. The certification process involves regular inspection of all organic operators, production techniques, labelling and sampling of organic produce to ensure compliance with all EU requirements.

I am unaware of the ‘many failures’ mentioned by the Deputy but presume the reference is to the findings of an EU audit of the sector carried out in 2016, which did identify a number of areas where controls could usefully be strengthened. This audit, which was extremely detailed, was one of a series undertaken in Member States and designed to harmonise controls across Europe.

Overall, the audit team concluded that Ireland had a control system in place which laid down a clear division of tasks between competent authority and the various control bodies. The EU audit team made some recommendations for further improvements, recognising that some of these had already been identified by my own Department as part of its ongoing management of the sector.

All recommendations made by the audit team have been fully implemented by my Department and this has been formally recognised by the EU audit team. I am satisfied therefore that the organic label in Ireland is fully intact and that our current control system is robust.

Aquaculture Licence Appeals

968. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the contacts, formal and informal and written and oral, made by his Department with the Aquaculture Licences Appeals Board in advance of the board's recent decision to amend the licence held by a company (details supplied) for its salmon farm at Inishfamard, County Cork. [24756/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): In furtherance of its consideration of an appeal against a Ministerial decision to amend the licence referred to by the Deputy, the Aquaculture Licences Appeals Board (ALAB) requested specific documentation from my Department relating to the original amendment. This request from ALAB was in written form and was received by my office in January 2018 and forwarded to the relevant Division of my Department in the normal way.

ALAB's request was in accordance with the applicable provisions of the 1997 Fisheries (Amendment) Act. My Department forwarded the relevant documentation to ALAB in the normal way.

In March 2018 my Department met with the Chair of the Aquaculture Licences Appeals Board to discuss, in broad terms, a number of routine corporate matters. The appeal referred to by the Deputy was not discussed.

Aquaculture Licence Appeals

969. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the environmental studies carried out by the Aquaculture Licences Appeals Board before deciding to increase the production limit of the salmon farm operated by a company (details supplied) at Inishfamard, County Cork. [24757/18]

970. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if the Aquaculture Licences Appeals Board has breached the Aarhus Convention by amending the salmon licence operated by a company (details supplied) at Inishfamard, County Cork without consulting the public and environmental bodies. [24758/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): I propose to take Questions Nos. 969 and 970 together.

The Aquaculture Licences Appeals Board (ALAB) is an independent body established by statute for the purpose of considering appeals of Ministerial decisions in respect of aquaculture.

The matters referred to by the Deputy are operational matters for ALAB and my Department has no function in that regard. The Deputy's questions have been referred to ALAB for its attention and response directly to the Deputy.

Aquaculture Licences

971. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason his Department has not yet concluded its investigation into the licence breaches at various salmon farms operated by a company (details supplied); and if this delay is due to the conflict of interest that arises for his Department between the proper regulation of salmon farming and the development of the industry. [24759/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): As the Deputy is aware my Department is currently examining possible breaches of licence conditions in respect of a number of aquaculture licences held by the Company referred to by the Deputy. My Department is also examining a possible breach of licence conditions in respect of a licence held by a third party and operated by the Company referred to by the Deputy.

There is always a strict separation between my Department's regulatory function in respect of aquaculture and its duty to promote the sustainable development of the industry. This separation of duties is strictly observed.

Every effort is being made by my Department to bring these examinations to a conclusion as soon as possible having regard to the complexities involved. As these examinations are part of an ongoing statutory process it would not be appropriate for me to comment further.

Aquaculture Licences

972. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if consistent breaches of licence conditions by a salmon farm operator are taken into account by his Department when processing new licence applications from that same operator. [24760/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Applications for aquaculture licences are considered by my Department in accordance with the provisions of the 1997 Fisheries (Amendment) Act, the 1933 Foreshore Act and the relevant National and EU legislation. The legislation provides for a period of statutory and public consultation in respect of each application.

Licensing decisions are made following the fullest consideration of all aspects of each application including scientific, technical, legislative and public interest aspects.

Animal Welfare

973. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine further to Parliamentary Question Nos. 432 and 433 of 23 January 2018, the powers that are available to ensure the enforcement of welfare standards of horses in the ownership and or care of individuals; his plans to bring forward legislation to prevent owners that have had horses seized on the grounds of neglect or cruelty from acquiring or providing care for other horses; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24768/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The questions of 23 January 2018 to which the Deputy refers related to steps being taken in order to deter horse owners from using canals, public fields and sides of roads to keep horses, and related matters.

The legal framework within which issues relating to animal neglect/abuse are addressed is provided by the Animal Health and Welfare Act 2013. This is a modern Act and is the main legal instrument available to my Department to enforce animal welfare standards. The basic

rule may be summarised by stating that the person having possession or control of an animal, including a horse, has responsibility for the care and welfare of that animal; it is this person's duty to take all necessary steps to protect the animal from unnecessary suffering and neglect, and not to be reckless regarding the animal's welfare. There is a specific requirement to ensure that an animal has access to an adequate supply of wholesome food and water.

The Act is enforced by authorised officers of my Department based at regional offices around the country, members of an Garda Síochána, officers of Customs and Excise and authorised officers of the Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and the Dublin Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. In addition, the Chief Executive of a local authority may appoint officers of the local authority to be authorised officers within the administrative area of the authority.

The main powers availed of under the Act are contained in section 38 which provides for extensive powers of inspection and investigation, including in appropriate circumstances, seizure and detention of animals and their retention for use in evidence. Section 42 provides for a system of legally binding notices, the breach of which constitutes a criminal offence.

The Act provides for a range of penalties that may be imposed. On summary conviction, an offender may be fined up to €5,000 (a Class A fine) and/or be sentenced to a term of imprisonment of up to 6 months. On conviction on indictment, a fine of up to €250,000 and or a term of 5 years imprisonment may be imposed. The Court may also, in particular circumstances disqualify a person from owning, keeping, having charge or control (directly or indirectly) of an animal, or being involved with activities relating to animals for a period, including, where appropriate, for the life of the person. The determination of any particular case is, of course, a matter for the trial court.

Animal Welfare

974. Deputy Clare Daly asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the property requirements needed by horse owners who apply for a trainer's licence. [24784/18]

975. Deputy Clare Daly asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if an organisation (details supplied) issued a trainer's licence to an individual in the past 12 months that is not the owner or lease holder of a suitable property to keep horses. [24785/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): I propose to take Questions Nos. 974 and 975 together.

The issuing of trainers licences is a matter for the Turf Club. I will request officials in my Department to refer both questions to the Turf Club for direct reply to the Deputy.

Young Farmers Scheme

976. Deputy Michael Healy-Rae asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of an appeal by a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24880/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The person named submitted applications under the 2017 National Reserve and the Young Farmers Scheme to my Department. These applications were unsuccessful and my Department notified the person named in writing of this outcome and also advised that he had the option to appeal the

decision.

The person named subsequently submitted an appeal of the decision to reject his applications and he also submitted additional documentation in support of his appeal. Based on the additional documentation submitted by the person named his appeal was successful. His applications under the 2017 National Reserve and the Young Farmers Scheme are now being finalised to facilitate payment as soon as possible.

Beef Data and Genomics Programme

977. Deputy Charlie McConologue asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of an appeal under the beef data and genomics programme for a person (details supplied) in County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24889/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The Agriculture Appeals Office has confirmed that an appeal was received from the person concerned relating to the Beef Data and Genomics Programme. The Appeals Office has advised that the Appeals Officer assigned to the case has made a decision on the appeal and the decision letter issued to the appellant on 22 May 2018.

Veterinary Inspection Service

978. Deputy Anne Rabbitte asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if his attention has been drawn to the amendment in January 2018 to section 10.4 of the certificate of suitability for a veterinary premises; his views on the change; the cost implications of same; the reason there was not a standard lead time to such alterations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24912/18]

979. Deputy Anne Rabbitte asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if his attention has been drawn to the number of licences that have been refused in 2018 (details supplied) due to the changes to section 10.4 of the certificate of suitability for a veterinary premises under the new rules set out by the Veterinary Council of Ireland, VCI; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24913/18]

985. Deputy Anne Rabbitte asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his views on issues being faced by an organisation (details supplied). [25048/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): I propose to take Questions Nos. 978, 979 and 985 together.

While I am the sponsoring Minister for the Veterinary Practice Act 2005 (VPA), the Veterinary Council of Ireland (VCI) is the statutory body established under the Act to regulate and manage the practice of veterinary medicine and veterinary nursing.

In accordance with Part 9 of the VPA, the VCI operate a Premises Accreditation Scheme (PAS) whereby all premises from which the practice of veterinary medicine is carried out must possess a Certificate of Suitability (COS). The VCI have reviewed and updated the PAS a number of times to reflect the developments that have occurred in veterinary practice and practice premises and also to reflect the VCI proposals for the future direction of the PAS.

Notwithstanding the VCI's independence on this matter, I understand that they carried out a review from mid 2016 to early 2017 of the PAS standards that applied to each classification of

premises to ensure that they fulfilled the required function for patients, the public and the veterinary profession. I am advised by the VCI that this review involved a consultation period from May to September 2017 when stakeholders were invited to consider the proposed amendments and give feedback. The revised PAS standards were agreed by the VCI in September 2017. All COS holders were advised of the new standards in October 2017. The new PAS Standards have been effective since 1 January 2018.

I have been advised that there has not been any delay in processing applications as a result of the change to the PAS.

Driver Safety

980. Deputy Peter Burke asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his views on the use of anti-roll bars and protective head gear on all-terrain vehicles; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24936/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Safety standards in respect of the manufacture of vehicles such as quads or ‘all-terrain vehicles’ are set out in Regulation (EU) No. 168/2013 and these have been transposed into Irish Legislation in SI No. 614/2015. The Regulation sets out the fundamental provisions on functional safety and limitations of maximum speed, power, ground clearance, etc.

The Regulation stipulates that manufacturers shall ensure that vehicles are designed, constructed and assembled so as to minimise the risk of injury to the vehicle occupants and to other road users. The regulation does not however contain reference to anti roll-bars and protective head gear. These matters have been examined by both the Road Safety Authority (RSA) and the Health and Safety Authority (HSA) and they have concluded that research on the use of anti roll bars on quad bikes has shown that in some cases the risk of injury from use of anti roll-bars may be greater and can lead to a reduction in safety to the user.

Both the RSA and the HSA recommend the use of protective head gear when using quads and I fully endorse their recommendations in this regard. The HSA has actively promoted the use of protective head gear and officials in my Department highlight the importance of its use at every opportunity.

Common Fisheries Policy

981. Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the full costs associated with the various court actions taken against the State regarding SI 3/2014 and SI 125/2016 on the matter of European Union (Common Fisheries Policy) (Point System) Regulations; the costs paid by his Department in defending these cases and all other third-party legal costs paid by his Department or the State at High Court or Supreme Court level; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24987/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): I can inform the Deputy that a number of cases arose from the operation of the European Communities (Common Fisheries Policy)(Point System) Regulations 2014 (S.I. No. 3 of 2014), whereas none arose in relation to the European Communities (Common Fisheries Policy)(Point System) Regulations 2016 (S.I. No. 125 of 2016).

In relation to S.I. No. 3 of 2014, the Table below contains details of cases in respect of

which certain costs have been paid to date.

I should advise that certain matters pertaining to costs have yet to be finalised in a number of relevant cases. The costs paid to date are set out in the following table.

Name of case	Costs paid to date
Doyle Fishing Company v Michael C. O'Connor and the Sea Fisheries Protection Authority	€19,017.00 (State's Counsel's fees)
Patrick O'Sullivan and Cathal O'Sullivan v Sea Fisheries Protection Authority and Ors.	€48,521.00 (State's Counsel's fees)
Crayden Fishing Company Limited v Sea Fisheries Protection Authority and Ors.	€72,319.08 (State's Counsel's fees)

Control of Horses

982. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if prosecutions have been taken by local authorities or his Department in regard to abandoned or neglected equines across the country; the follow-up steps taken to ensure that owners of these animals are held legally responsible for same rather than only having animal seized and impounded; the level of resources available to prevent these occurrences; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24995/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): My Department has responsibility for the administration of the Animal Health and Welfare Act 2013. As the Deputy will recall, this Act was passed following a constructive and extensive debate and all sides of this House engaged in the issues in a spirit of co-operation, significantly improving the Bill in the course of its passage. This legislation serves to support and underpin the welfare of all animals, including horses. It is implemented by my Department's officers at regional office level, who are assisted in this work by authorised officers of the ISPCA and the DSPCA.

Matters relating to abandoned horses fall to be dealt with by local authorities under the Control of Horses Act 1995 or by an Garda Síochána as a road traffic matter or an offence under the Animals Act 1985. The facts of each particular case will dictate applicable legislation. With regard to the scale and evolving pattern of this problem, it should be noted that the number of stray/abandoned horses seized by Local Authorities in 2017 was 1,549, down from 4,923 in 2014.

There have been 8 successful prosecutions taken by my Department concerning unnecessary suffering and negligence in relation to welfare of horses since the Animal Health and Welfare Act 2013. A further 2 cases remain before the Courts.

I am aware that a number of cases are being prepared by An Garda Síochána for submission to the Director of Public Prosecutions. In other cases, the Director has directed prosecutions in respect of files submitted by An Garda Síochána but I have no definitive statistics in this regard.

GLAS Payments

983. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of a GLAS payment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25005/18]

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 payment for scheme year 2015 along with the 2016 advance payment.

The participant was selected for an inspection and has requested a review of the inspection findings. The Department has been in direct contact with the person named and is currently awaiting the submission of additional documentation in support of the review request.

Sheep Welfare Scheme

984. Deputy Michael Healy-Rae asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of a payment under the sheep welfare scheme for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25006/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): An application was received under the Sheep Welfare Scheme from the person named on 23 January 2017. In this case, an 85% advance payment issued to the person named in November 2017. The 15% balancing payment in respect of this application has now been processed and should be in the individual's account in the coming days.

Question No. 985 answered with Question No. 978.

Animal Welfare

986. Deputy Clare Daly asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if his attention has been drawn to breaches of animal welfare regulations at a farm (details supplied) in north County Wexford; if inspectors have been called to the premises; and his views on the general situation regarding poor conditions on some farms in which animal carcasses have been left to rot to the detriment of the health and welfare of animals and humans present. [25113/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): My Department has recently become aware of the issue at the location in question and is continuing its investigations into the matter.

Commencement of Legislation

987. Deputy Mattie McGrath asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the sections and parts of all legislation brought forward by his Department in each of the past four years that have yet to be commenced; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25170/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): I wish to advise the Deputy that Section 12 of The Horse Racing Ireland Act 2016 is the only piece of legislation, in the past four years, which has not yet commenced. Currently, Horse Racing Ireland is putting new structures in place to facilitate the commencement of Section 12.

Departmental Schemes

988. Deputy Martin Kenny asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine further to Parliamentary Questions Nos. 1155, 1156, 1158 and 1160 of 16 January 2018, when a response will issue in view of the provisions contained in Standing Order 42A(1)(b) of Dáil

Éireann (details supplied). [25192/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The delay in replying to the Deputy is regretted. It is due to an administrative oversight.

Replies to the PQs referenced are as set out in the following link:

The following table illustrates the amounts recovered from schemes during the time period 2014-2017 and 2018 to 7 June 2018.

[Table]

Literacy Programmes

989. Deputy Pat Casey asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the measures being taken to assist farmers who have dyslexia and/or literacy issues in regard to inspections, applications and online registrations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25226/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): My Department aims to ensure that the needs of all its customers, including people with literacy issues, are met and that the rights of equal treatment are upheld in the delivery of services. We are also keenly aware of the difficulties that some customers have in accessing information and staff are available to provide any assistance necessary.

My Department has responsibility for delivering a wide range of schemes and services to its many customers. Many of these schemes are, by their very nature, complex. In order to provide the best possible customer service it is important to ensure that participants in these schemes have a good understanding of their terms and conditions. To this end, my Department endeavours to ensure that the language used in application forms, supporting documentation and information campaigns is clear, concise and accurate and only necessary detail is provided and requested.

In relation to inspections, my Department has established the Farm Advisory System which provides advice to farmers on land eligibility, cross compliance, and other requirements of the CAP. Currently there are over 800 advisors approved and fully trained under FAS. Contact details for these advisors are available on the Department's website under the Farmer Schemes & Payments/Farm Advisory System area.

An audio version of the Department's Explanatory Handbook for Cross Compliance requirements is available on the Department's website under the Farmer Schemes & Payments/Cross Compliance area. The "Browsealoud" facility is also available on the Department's website which reads web pages aloud for people with literacy and/or visual impairments.

Furthermore officials from my Department regularly attend information meetings organised by Teagasc, the Farm Bodies, etc. to provide briefing on inspection requirements at local level.

In respect of Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) and related applications, my Department held a number of clinics around the country during the application period. These clinics were publicised in the local and national media and afforded farmers an opportunity to sit with an official from my Department who would guide them through the process of registering and submitting an application on the day. Other supports include 'How to' videos which are available on the

Department's website at:

<https://www.agriculture.gov.ie/agfoodiehelpvideos/>

The BPS online guide is also available at

<https://www.agriculture.gov.ie/farmerschemespayments/>

<basicpaymentschemegreeningareasofnaturalconstraint/>

<2018basicpaymentschemegreeningareasofnaturalconstraint/bpsonline2018/>

Once registered, farmers also have the option of nominating an individual, to act on their behalf, to carry out their business with Online Services. A nomination letter is sent out to the farmer, for completion by the nominated person and signed by the farmer.

Applicants can continue to avail of assistance throughout the year via the BPS help desk at 076 1064420.

Fur Farming

990. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his plans to deal with an issue (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25230/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): My Department has statutory responsibility for the welfare and protection of farmed animals under the European Communities (Welfare of Farmed Animals) Regulations, 2010(Statutory Instrument No 311/2010) and the Animal Health and Welfare Act 2013. Irish fur farmers are, in this regard, subject to the same animal welfare legislation as other livestock farmers. A review of all aspects of fur farming in Ireland was commissioned in November 2011. The Terms of Reference of the Review Group were:

- (i) To review fur farming in Ireland taking into account existing legislative provisions for the licensing of mink farming;
- (ii) To comment on the economic benefits of the sector;
- (iii) To consider the effectiveness of existing welfare controls, and
- (iv) To make appropriate recommendations

The Review Group invited submissions from the public and interested parties and considered over four hundred submissions which were received.

The Group concluded that it did not find the arguments in favour of banning the farming of fur animals in Ireland compelling and recommended that instead, fur farming be allowed continue under licence and subject to official control.

On foot of the Review Group's deliberations, my Department introduced more rigorous controls on licence holders in the areas of animal welfare, animal accommodation, security and nutrient management. Licensees are subject to regular inspections, including unannounced inspections by Department officials.

Aquaculture Licence Applications

991. Deputy Michael Healy-Rae asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of an oyster licence application by a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25240/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): All applications for aquaculture licences are considered by my Department in accordance with the provisions of the 1997 Fisheries (Amendment) Act, the 1933 Foreshore Act and applicable EU legislation. The process involves consultation with a wide range of scientific and technical advisers as well as various Statutory Consultees. The legislation also provides for a period of public consultation.

The specific applications referred to by the Deputy are currently the subject of Public and Statutory consultation in accordance with the applicable legislation.

As the applications are under active consideration as part of a statutory process it would not be appropriate for me to comment further on the matter pending the completion of the licensing process.

Animal Welfare

992. Deputy Clare Daly asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if his attention has been drawn to footage (details supplied); if this farm passed its 2017 health and welfare inspection; and if the 2017 inspection report contained details of distressed animals. [25341/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): My Department conducts its responsibilities in the area of animal welfare under the legal framework set out in the European Communities (Welfare of Farmed Animals) Regulations, 2010(Statutory Instrument No 311/2010) and the Animal Health and Welfare Act 2013.

In relation to the facility referred to, two inspections were carried out in the course of 2017 by inspectors from my Department, at the midpoint of the year and again at the end of the year. In both inspection reports the animals were noted as exhibiting normal behaviour. The animals on the days of inspection were alert and in good health.

Licence holders continue to be subject to rigorous controls in the areas of animal welfare, animal accommodation and nutrient management. Licensees are subject to regular inspections, including unannounced inspections by Department officials.

GLAS Payments

993. Deputy Michael Healy-Rae asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of a farm payment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25344/18]

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 scheme years 2015 and 2016.

In relation to payment for 2017, Administrative checks involving a number of sections with-

in the Department take place on all GLAS claims. All cases must clear validation checks before payment can issue. Department officials are working proactively to complete the checks. Once this case clears validations the 2017 advance payment will be made. GLAS payments are issuing on a weekly basis.

Departmental Staff Recruitment

994. Deputy Charlie McConologue asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if his Department is conducting a new round of recruitment for technical agriculture officers; if so, the stages involved in the recruitment of these officers; the number of officers which his Department plans to appoint; if the ranking of the persons on the panel is conducted by the Public Appointments Service or his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25365/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): I can confirm that the Public Appointments Service is currently administering a recruitment campaign on behalf of my Department for the recruitment of Technical Agricultural Officers. The competition was advertised by the Public Appointments Service on the 18 May 2018 with a closing date of 6 June 2018.

My Department operates in a rapidly changing environment and its structure must facilitate the flexibility to deploy resources as business needs arise. Appointments of Technical Agricultural Officers will be made on that basis.

All aspects of the assessment process including the selecting and ranking of candidates is a matter for the Public Appointments Service.

Transport of Animals

995. Deputy Mick Barry asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if violations (details supplied) involving Irish trucks can be investigated. [25430/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): An investigation into the Irish registered vehicles involved in the incident to which the Deputy refers has been carried out in conjunction with the French authorities. I am advised that those who were found to have breached the European Communities (Animal Transport and Control Post) Regulations 2006 in the case referred to, have been subject to sanction, with the issue of fixed payment notices and have been warned as to their future conduct.

Aquaculture Regulation

996. Deputy Mick Wallace asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the penalties in place for farmed salmon operators who fail to notify the relevant parties of a fish escape; the relevant parties who should be notified in the event of a salmon escape; the numbers of farmed salmon operators who have been sanctioned for failing to report salmon escapes in each of the years 2007 to 2017 and to date in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25456/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The detailed information requested by the Deputy covering a period of more than 10 years is not readily

available and will require an extensive examination of my Department's records as well as contact with relevant agencies. The information will be forwarded to the Deputy by my Department as soon as possible.

Inland Fisheries Ireland Investigations

997. Deputy Mick Wallace asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his views on the findings of the Inland Fisheries Ireland report on the occurrence of farmed Atlantic salmon in rivers in the western river basin district in August and September 2017; his further views on the conclusion of the report which states that the salmon captured from Bunowen, Erriff and Bundorragha and provided for genetic analysis are fish farm escapes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25457/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): As the Deputy is aware, during 2017 my Department noted media reports of salmon being found in rivers on the western seaboard which may have been from farmed stock. My Department advised Inland Fisheries Ireland that where anglers or officers of Inland Fisheries Ireland suspected that they had collected salmon from farmed stock that the fish should be sent to the Marine Institute for analysis, with a view to determining whether they were in fact from farmed stock.

The Marine Institute has confirmed that it received no stock for examination from anglers or from Inland Fisheries Ireland. In addition the Marine Institute did not receive any request from Inland Fisheries Ireland to examine salmon that appeared to be from farmed stock.

Inland Fisheries Ireland

998. Deputy Mick Wallace asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if his Department or an agency under its remit including the Marine Institute contacted Inland Fisheries Ireland to request either the scales or carcasses of the farmed salmon stock recovered from the Delphi, Erriff, Kylemore-Dawros, Newport and Bunowen catchments in August 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25458/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): As the Deputy is aware, during 2017 my Department noted media reports of salmon being found in rivers on the western seaboard which may have been from farmed stock. My Department advised Inland Fisheries Ireland that where anglers or officers of Inland Fisheries Ireland suspected that they had collected salmon from farmed stock that the fish should be sent to the Marine Institute for analysis, with a view to determining whether they were in fact from farmed stock.

This information was communicated directly by my Department to Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) in writing on 2 October 2017. The specific Marine Institute address to which the fish should be sent was also provided to IFI in this communication.

Aquaculture Regulation

999. Deputy Mick Wallace asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the actions taken by his Department following the notification of a fish escape incident at a salmon farm located at Glinsk, Mulroy Bay, County Donegal in July 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25459/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): As soon as the incident referred to by the Deputy was reported to my Department an inspection of the site was carried out by my Department's Marine Engineering Division and a detailed report was prepared. As the Deputy is aware my Department's records indicate that all relevant stakeholders, including Inland Fisheries Ireland, were informed of the incident in accordance with the applicable aquaculture licence conditions.

Fur Farming

1000. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine further to Parliamentary Question No. 494 of 30 January 2018, if his attention has been drawn to the fact that the United Kingdom, Austria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Norway and the Netherlands have banned commercial fur farming on the grounds of animal welfare; the reason for allowing the practice of commercial mink farming to continue here; if the phasing out of the licensing system for these three remaining farms will be considered; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25540/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): My Department has statutory responsibility for the welfare and protection of farmed animals under the European Communities (Welfare of Farmed Animals) Regulations, 2010(Statutory Instrument No 311/2010) and the Animal Health and Welfare Act 2013. Irish fur farmers are, in this regard, subject to the same animal welfare legislation as other livestock farmers.

A review of all aspects of fur farming in Ireland was commissioned in November 2011. The Terms of Reference of the Review Group were:

- (i) To review fur farming in Ireland taking into account existing legislative provisions for the licensing of mink farming;
- (ii) To comment on the economic benefits of the sector;
- (iii) To consider the effectiveness of existing welfare controls, and
- (iv) To make appropriate recommendations

The Review Group invited submissions from the public and interested parties and considered over four hundred submissions which were received.

The Group concluded that it did not find the arguments in favour of banning the farming of fur animals in Ireland compelling and recommended that instead, fur farming be allowed continue under licence and subject to official control.

On foot of the Review Group's deliberations, my Department introduced more rigorous controls on licence holders in the areas of animal welfare, animal accommodation, security and nutrient management. Licensees are subject to regular inspections, including unannounced inspections by Department officials.

Notwithstanding the position in other European countries, given the recommendations from the review group and in view of the enhanced controls being carried out by my Department, there are no plans to phase out the licensing of fur farming.

Departmental Funding

1001. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his Department's capital allocation in each of the years 2019 to 2023; and the areas to which funds will be allocated in each of those years. [25563/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The recently published National Development Plan (NDP) 2018-2027 includes indicative Exchequer allocations for each Ministerial vote group up to 2022. It is intended that the indicative allocation for 2023 will be announced in Budget 2019 this October. The indicative allocations for my Department are set out in the following table:

Year	2019	2020	2021	2022
Capital Allocation (€M)	255	258	265	275

While the distribution of the allocations for each of the years will only be confirmed as part of the annual Estimates process, I can say capital expenditure by my department over the period will include support for On farm investment, the forestry programme, food sector company investment, the development of Fisheries Harbour Centres and local authority harbours, support for the development of the seafood sector, funding for the state bodies including research and innovation facilities as well as for certain facilities and premises for my department itself and its state bodies.

Forestry Sector

1002. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason an appeal by a person (details supplied) with the Forestry Service is taking so long to finalise. [25688/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The grounds for appeal have been fully considered and the appeal has now been finalised. All parties have been notified of the decision.

EU Data

1003. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the EU fines paid in each of the years 2015 to 2017, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25725/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The following table details the EU disallowances paid by my Department in the years 2015, 2016 and 2017.

Year	Amount
2015	€67,839,695.67
2016	0
2017	0

The EU disallowance set out above occurs in the form of the exclusion from EU funding of EU funded and co funded agricultural schemes. €66,759,681.34 was for various schemes for the seven year period 2008 to 2014 inclusive. This relates mainly to Commission findings that

some aspects of Irish control systems were insufficiently robust at excluding ineligible land from payments to farmers in EU funded schemes and represents 0.5% of the €12 billion in EU funding for these schemes in this seven year period. Some €64m of the amount was in respect of the years 2008 to 2012.

A financial correction/exclusion of €1,055,704.33 was imposed in respect of legislation governing the EU Scheme of Aid for Producer Organisations in the Fruit and Vegetables Sector for the 2009 and 2010 Scheme years and there was a €24,310 exclusion in respect of debtor notifications.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

1004. Deputy Catherine Connolly asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the likely penalties that will be paid by Ireland for failure to meet EU 2020 carbon emissions targets; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24489/18]

1007. Deputy Michael McGrath asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the estimated number of fines Ireland will receive from 2020 onwards for missing emissions targets; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25242/18]

1023. Deputy Sean Sherlock asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the status of Ireland's obligations in respect of the Kyoto Protocol including the purchase of carbon credits over the period from the signing of the protocol (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24907/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1004, 1007 and 1023 together

Under the first period of the Kyoto Protocol (2008-2012), Ireland committed to limiting total national greenhouse gas emissions to 13% above 1990 levels. In anticipation of a requirement for the State to purchase carbon credits in partial fulfilment of Ireland's Kyoto Protocol and ongoing obligations, the Carbon Fund Act 2007 established a carbon fund for this purpose and empowered the National Treasury Management Agency (NTMA) to undertake such purchases on behalf of the State, under my policy direction in consultation with the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform.

Prior to the enactment of the Carbon Fund Act 2007, the State entered into investments in a number of multilateral funds to invest in projects aimed at achieving greenhouse gas emissions reductions, namely the Multilateral Carbon Credit Fund, managed by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, as well as the Carbon Fund for Europe and Bio-Carbon Fund, both managed by the World Bank. Ongoing management of these investments is a matter for my Department. However, since enactment of the Carbon Fund Act 2007, payments in respect of these funds are made by the NTMA through the Carbon Fund in accordance with the provisions of the Act. The BioCarbon Fund remains the only Fund with outstanding payment commitments and these currently amount to \$756,781 (approximately €640,000 at current exchange rates).

In addition to these three funds, the NTMA has engaged in a number of direct market transactions for the purchase of carbon credits directly from the market in order to assist with compliance with Ireland's obligations under the first period of the Kyoto Protocol.

Through the direct market purchases and investment in the three funds listed above, a total of 8,382,380 credits were received by the State and a further 620,000 are expected to be re-

ceived on foot of the State's investment in the BioCarbon Fund. Of this total, 3,052,416 have been surrendered for compliance with the first commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol.

Details of all transactions entered into the NTMA are published annually in a Carbon Fund Report at www.ntma.ie in accordance with section 6 of the Carbon Fund Act 2007.

The following table details the level of expenditure on these funds and transactions in the period between 2006 and 2017. All amounts are in millions of euro.

YEAR	Multilateral Carbon Credit Fund	Carbon fund for Europe and BioCarbon Fund	NTMA Market transactions	Total
2006	20			20
2007		3.7		3.7
2008			53	53
2009		2.3	33.8	36.1
2010		4.1		4.1
2011		1.9		1.9
2012		0.4		0.4
2013				0
2014				0
2015				0
2016		0.4		0.4
2017		0.4		0.4
	20	13.2	86.8	120

Ireland's commitments under the second period of the Kyoto Protocol, (2013-2020), will be discharged via the 2009 EU Effort Sharing Decision 406/2009/EC (ESD). The ESD established annual emission limits for the period 2013 to 2020 for each EU Member State. For the year 2020 itself, the target set for Ireland is that emissions should be 20% below their value in 2005. This is jointly the most demanding 2020 reduction target allocated under the ESD, and one shared only by Denmark and Luxembourg. The latest projections of greenhouse gas emissions, published by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in May 2018, indicate that emissions from those sectors of the economy covered by the ESD could be between 0% and 1% below 2005 levels by 2020.

While this is very disappointing, it is not surprising given the recent pace of economic growth, and the consequent increases in emissions from the agriculture and transport sectors in particular. The projected shortfall to our targets is further exacerbated by both the constrained investment capacity over the past decade due to the economic crisis, and the extremely challenging nature of the target itself. In fact, it is now accepted that Ireland's 2020 target was not consistent with what would be achievable on an EU wide cost-effective basis.

The ESD includes a number of flexibility mechanisms to enable Member States to meet their annual emissions targets, including provisions to bank any excess allowances to future years and to trade allowances between Member States. Using our banked emissions allocations from the period to 2015, Ireland is projected to comply with its emissions reduction targets in each of the years 2013 to 2017. However, our cumulative emissions are expected to exceed targets for 2018, 2019 and 2020, which will result in a requirement to purchase additional allowances. While this purchasing requirement is not, at this stage, expected to be significant, further analysis will be required to quantify the likely costs involved, in light of the final amount and price of allowances required.

At present Ireland holds a total of 5,329,964 credits (5,255,000 Certified Emission Reductions [CERs] and 74,964 Emission Reduction Units [ERUs]) on behalf of the State in the NTMA Account on the EU Registry, of which 5,265,088 are eligible for compliance under the Effort Sharing Decision.

Waste Management

1005. Deputy Michael McGrath asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the policy on the use of incineration; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24981/18]

1006. Deputy Michael McGrath asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he will consider reinstating the incineration levy abolished in 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24982/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1005 and 1006 together.

Government waste management policy is set out in A Resource Opportunity - Waste Management Policy in Ireland, published in 2012.

European, national and regional waste management policy is predicated on the waste hierarchy as set out in Article 4 of the 2008 Waste Framework Directive (2008/98/EC), whereby the prevention, preparing for reuse, recycling and other recovery of waste are preferred options to the disposal or landfilling of waste.

Thermal recovery activities such as waste to energy, co-incineration (e.g. at cement kilns), pyrolysis and gasification, where the principle use of the waste is as a fuel to generate energy, sit on the ‘other recovery’ tier of the waste hierarchy and in line with European policy are preferred to the disposal or landfilling of waste.

In this regard, 21% of managed municipal waste (by weight) was sent to landfill in 2014 compared to 41% in 2012 and 92% in 1995. New waste management targets recently agreed by the European Council include that Member States shall take the necessary measures to ensure that by 2035 the amount of municipal waste landfilled is reduced to 10% or less of the total amount of municipal waste generated (by weight).

The continued implementation of European, national and regional waste management policy to manage waste in line with the waste hierarchy will help ensure that Ireland is well placed to meet this new target.

The potential introduction of economic instruments designed to improve environmental behaviour are being considered in the context of a review of the Environment Fund.

Question No. 1007 answered with Question No. 1004.

Waste Management

1008. Deputy Catherine Connolly asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his plans to introduce a single use plastics levy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25267/18]

1033. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his plans to ban the use of single use plastics; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25276/18]

1034. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the efforts which have been taken to date to reduce plastic use here; his plans in place to ban single use plastics; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25381/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1008, 1033 and 1034 together.

Ireland is currently one of the top performing countries in the EU in terms of recycling and recovery. The EPA Progress Report Towards EU Targets 2017 showed that Ireland recycled 34% by weight of plastics in 2015, counting exclusively material that is recycled back into plastics. The EU target is 22.5% and Ireland is clearly well ahead of this target.

In January 2018, the European Commission published the European Strategy for Plastics in the Circular Economy. The strategy focuses on plastic production and use. It sets a goal of ensuring all plastic packaging will be recyclable by 2030.

Since then, I have written to the European Commissioner with responsibility for the environment to welcome the plastics strategy. I assured him Ireland fully embraced the ambitions of the new strategy. However I also asked the Commission to focus, in particular, on the most difficult non-recyclable plastics such as soft wrapping, film and single use items such as plastic straws. I am determined to make sure these products, if they come onto the market here or elsewhere in Europe will be recyclable or compostable and that they will not go into landfill sites.

I have also welcomed very recent proposals by the European Commission to tackle the problems posed by single-use plastic items, and I am expecting both the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers to progress these proposals as soon as possible. I believe that working proactively with our European colleagues will achieve a greater environmental benefit quicker.

In line with the potential for European bans and restrictions, I am considering what financial incentives or penalties I can introduce in Ireland, to tackle the problems caused by single-use plastic items in a way that is compatible with EU legislation.

I am looking to bring forward shortly practical solutions along with my government colleagues responsible for the marine environment and fisheries that will work in an Irish context.

Electric Vehicles

1009. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if additional charge points will be provided for electric cars in Killarney and surrounding areas; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25331/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): The vast majority of electric vehicle charging happens at home, which aligns with both technology and patterns of use of vehicles. To support home charging, I introduced the Electric Vehicle Home Charger Grant scheme this year. This scheme, which came into operation on 1 January 2018, supports the cost of installing a home charger up to a maximum of €600 for buyers of both new and second-hand electric vehicles. In terms of the number and extent of publicly accessible charging, the National Policy Framework on the Alternative Fu-

els Infrastructure for Transport in Ireland notes that Ireland's current electric vehicle charging network infrastructure is ahead of current market demand. However, it is recognised that the future development of electric vehicle public charging needs to progress alongside the growth of electric vehicles.

The existing fleet of public chargers was rolled out by the ESB, through its eCars programme. A map showing the charge points, including the status and availability of the charge points, is available on the ESB's website at www.esb.ie/ecars. The Commission for Regulation of Utilities approved an application from ESB Networks to recover the costs of this project to a maximum of €25 million from use of system charges.

Following a public consultation process, the Commission for Regulation of Utilities published its independent regulatory decision in relation to the future ownership of the electric vehicle charging infrastructure in October 2017. A key outcome of the decision is that the charging network should not form part of the regulated asset base and therefore expansions of the network should not be funded from network charges. This is in keeping with the proposals set out by the European Commission in the Clean Energy for All Europeans package which was published in 2016.

The decision also set out the need for the electric vehicle charging infrastructure to operate on a commercial basis. In the absence of State-led support, this is unlikely to happen in the near term. Funding has, therefore, been allocated in my Department's budget this year to support the provision of public charging.

A key aspect of the work of the Low Emission Vehicle Taskforce, co-chaired by my Department and the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport, involves examining how best to support the development of the public charging network. The first phase of the Taskforce's work, which focuses on electric vehicles, is nearing completion and I expect to bring forward proposals that will support the provision of effective and efficient publicly accessible electric vehicle charging.

In this regard, funding for public charging in local communities is already available through the Better Energy Communities Scheme. The scheme, which is administered by the SEAI, supports community based partnerships to improve the energy efficiency of homes, businesses and community facilities in a local area.

Media Mergers

1010. Deputy Catherine Murphy asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he has considered the need for rules for media organisations regarding the character or professional reputation of potential investors; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24235/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): Mergers and acquisitions in respect of media organisations in the State are subject to a robust regulatory regime.

Firstly, as a result of amendments made to the Competition Act 2002 by the Competition & Consumer Protection Act 2014, mergers and acquisitions involving one or more media businesses must be notified to me as Minister. Following an assessment of the proposed media merger's impact on the plurality of media in the State, including in relation to diversity of ownership, editorial ethos, governance and ownership and control, I must make a determination whether or not the proposed media merger may proceed.

The examinations of all previous proposed media mergers conducted by my Department are available on my Department's *website*, as are a number of supplementary materials and a FAQ page concerning the media mergers process.

Secondly, the Broadcasting Act 2009 requires the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland to ensure the provision of open and pluralistic broadcasting services; to promote diversity in viewpoint, outlet and source, and to promote diversity in control of the more influential commercial and community broadcasting services.

One way in which the BAI achieve these goals is to assess licence applications and proposals for ownership and control changes under the BAI Ownership and Control Policy 2012, including in relation to character, expertise and experience. This Policy is currently under review by the Authority.

Further information regarding the work of the Authority can be found on its website.

Cyber Security Policy

1011. Deputy John Brassil asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the measures in place to prevent or minimise threats to the electricity and water infrastructure in view of threats described in an article (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24237/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): The National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC), which is a unit of my Department, has been engaged in a series of actions around assisting Government Departments and State Agencies in preserving the security of their networks and data since its establishment in 2011. The NCSC engages with national and international stakeholders, gathering information and acting as a conduit for sharing this with constituents including operators of Critical National Infrastructure (including electricity and water infrastructure), businesses, and Government Departments and Agencies. The NCSC also provides expert advice and analysis on cyber security related issues and coordinates responses to significant incidents. This involves collating and analysing data from cyber-attacks and coordinating with those targeted to introduce mitigation measures. As such, the NCSC continues to work with utility operators and with similar bodies in other jurisdictions to ensure that risks to infrastructure in Ireland are managed appropriately, including the active management of ongoing issues. The unit also participates in international Cyber Security training exercises, including a pan European exercise on 6-7 June 2018. The NCSC is also home to the national Computer Security Incident Response Team (CSIRT-IE) which has received international accreditation and plays an active role in a number of European and international organisations. The NCSC has been heavily engaged in work to prepare for implementation of the EU Network and Information Security Directive, which places binding security requirements on critical infrastructure operators and certain key Digital Service Providers. These requirements, which will be legally enforceable, involve a series of technical measures that operators will have to take to secure their systems and to be able to react in the case of an incident. They will also be obliged to report any serious incidents to the NCSC, which will assist in both national and EU level incident response.

Fisheries Protection

1012. Deputy Peter Burke asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the rationale for the new bye-law to allow for the removal of pike from certain

waters; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24259/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Seán Kyne): I have given notice of proposals to make a Designated Salmonid Waters Bye-Law and instigated a public consultation seeking observations on the draft proposals at any time during the period of 21 days which concluded on 25 May 2018. The principal intention behind the proposed (draft) Bye-Law is to give statutory status to the existing policy designation of seven distinctive waters for their management primarily as brown trout waters.

The seven waters are Lough Sheelin in the Limerick Fishery District, Loughs Conn and Cullin in the Ballina Fishery District, Loughs Corrib, Mask and Carra in the Galway Fishery District and Lough Arrow in the Sligo Fishery District.

These seven limestone lakes are quite unique in terms of topography and trout habitat and have long been managed as wild brown trout fisheries via established stock management programmes. From that perspective, these waters are considered especially important.

The scope of the draft Bye-Law is confined to the seven distinctive State-owned waters where established stock control measures are already in place. This represents a small number of the many angling lakes and waters available.

Submissions from the public consultation are currently being considered before the draft Bye-Law is finalised. In addition, the proposed Bye-law is subject to legal consultation.

The complexity of a broader designation of waters and any required management measures, will have to be considered as a matter of primary legislation. Therefore, I have directed that this matter is to be considered in the context of the major Inland Fisheries Consolidation Bill currently being advanced by the Department.

Online Safety

1013. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if funding is available for schools or other organisations to provide safer social media alternatives to children and young persons. [24384/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): My Department does not provide any funding of the nature referred to by the Deputy. As the Deputy is aware, I hosted an Open Policy Debate on the subject of Online Safety in March of this year. The event was supported by five other Ministers and organised in conjunction with the Department of Justice and Equality; Education and Skills; Health; Business Enterprise and Innovation; Children and Youth Affairs.

In opening the event, the Taoiseach announced that it was the Government's intention to prepare an Action Plan on Online Safety. The Department of An Taoiseach is coordinating the preparation of this plan, and my Department is actively contributing to its preparation.

Energy Schemes

1014. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if a matter in relation to SEAI grants for insulation (details supplied) will be examined; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24452/18]

1024. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his views on a matter (details supplied) regarding the insulation grant; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25037/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1014 and 1024 together.

The Better Energy Programme is funded by my Department and administered by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI). The aim of the programme is to improve the energy efficiency of our built environment, in a way which represents the best possible use of Exchequer funding. This involves making difficult decisions and targeting supports like limiting eligible homes to those built before 2006 and limiting each home to one grant per type of energy efficiency upgrade.

Therefore, as new homes are already required to meet specific energy performance standards and to incorporate renewables, grant support is currently focussed on improving the conditions of existing dwellings, and on developing renewables in this area. Grant funding further works in homes that already possess this level of energy efficiency would not represent a cost-effective use of Exchequer funds. For information, grant funding for renewable measures under the programme is available to homes built before 2011.

Neither my Department nor the SEAI is responsible for control of building regulations. The Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government leads on the Building Control Regulations which require owners, builders and registered construction professionals to demonstrate through the Statutory Register of Building Control Activity that the works or building concerned have been designed and constructed in compliance with Building Regulations.

It is current Government policy that under the Better Energy Homes scheme a home cannot receive grant funding twice for the same energy efficiency measure. In the case cited, this means that since the home in question has already received a grant for cavity wall insulation it is not eligible to receive another grant for any other form of wall insulation. The rationale for this policy is that applying a second version of wall insulation to a home that has already received one form of wall insulation would result in a lesser amount of energy savings being delivered and since the funds that are available for energy efficiency are limited, I must prioritise their use where they will have the most impact.

I understand the Deputy's point that in order to encourage the move away from fossil fuels that additional wall insulation may become necessary for some properties that previously received grant funding under the scheme. This is why homes that have previously received grant aid, but can now meet the criteria for the new Deep Retrofit Pilot scheme (which is supporting householders to make the next step and move off fossil fuels and get their home up to an A3 Building Energy Rating (BER)), will be eligible for further funding. Further details are available on the SEAI website: www.seai.ie/grants/home-grants/deep-retrofit-programme

Waste Management

1015. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the scale of coffee grain residue from retail outlets in view of the rise in retail coffee consumption in recent years. [24486/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is charged with reporting data on waste management. A wide range of waste statistics is available on the EPA website (<http://>

www.epa.ie/nationalwastestatistics), including national waste reports and data releases containing information on composting and anaerobic digestion of biodegradable waste generated in Ireland. The most recent data release indicates that the quantity of biodegradable municipal waste, which would include used coffee grinds, sent for composting and anaerobic digestion increased by 19 per cent between 2015 and 2016 (from 194 thousand tonnes to 231 thousand tonnes). This is a clear indication that the food waste regulations have had a positive impact on increasing the quantity of municipal waste accepted for composting/anaerobic digestion. The Waste Management (Food Waste) Regulations 2009 place clear obligations on businesses - including coffee outlets, to promote the segregation and recovery of food waste, for purposes of producing energy, compost and digestate, thereby supporting job creation in the waste and bio-energy sectors. The Regulations also facilitate the achievement of the targets set out in the Landfill Directive (Directive 99/31/EC) for the diversion of bio-degradable municipal waste from landfill sites, by directing source-segregated food waste to composting and to other forms of treatment.

Broadband Service Provision

1016. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if broadband will be provided at an address (details supplied). [24510/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): The National Broadband Plan (NBP) aims to deliver high speed access (minimum 30 megabits per second) to all premises in Ireland regardless of location. The NBP has been a catalyst in encouraging investment by the telecoms sector. 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 under the NBP. 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 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.

I fully recognise the importance of availability of high speed connectivity for all premises in Ireland including the referenced premises 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 an AMBER area and will be part of 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.dccae.gov.ie/en-ie/communications/topics/Broadband/national-broadband-plan/Pages/NBP-Information-Leaflets.aspx>

Programme for Government Implementation

1017. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the status of the implementation of the Programme for Partnership Government as it applies to his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24572/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): The Government recently approved the second Programme for a Partnership Government annual report which provides a comprehensive update on progress since May 2017. I provided input to the Department of the Taoiseach setting out the progress over the last 12 months on the extensive number of commitments relating to my Department. I understand that the annual report will be published shortly and will be available on the website of the Department of the Taoiseach. The commitments for my Department are being progressed according to plan, many of which are critical to the economic and social well-being of citizens and businesses across the State. Some of the main highlights in the 2017 report are as follows: Ireland's first statutory National Mitigation Plan was published in July 2017 and the first statutory National Adaptation Framework published in January 2018.

In 2017 €68.15m was invested in the Better Energy Programme providing energy efficiency upgrades to over 25,000 buildings. An additional €35m was announced in Budget 2018 for the expansion of energy efficiency programmes across the public, commercial and residential sectors, bringing the total investment for the sector to €117m for 2018.

The procurement process to engage a company to build and maintain a future proofed high speed broadband network to 542,000 premises in Ireland is in its final stages.

The stated timelines of reaching preferred bidder stage by September 2018 is still on target.

Funding of €1.3m was provided for the 2017 Anti-Dumping Initiative which saw the successful delivery of over 200 projects across all 31 local authority areas. This supports projects tackling illegal dumping, which incorporates the use of SMART enforcement tools and empowering people to help the environment.

More detailed information on all of my Department's commitments will be available in the published annual report.

Departmental Meetings

1018. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the meetings that have taken place since 1 January 2011 between him or officials in his Department with a company (details supplied); if meetings took place on 9 March 2011 and 15 July 2011; if so, the details of those meetings; the list of attendees; the purpose of the meeting; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24680/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): A Freedom of Information (FOI) request was received by my Department in December 2017, seeking records of meetings or any correspondence between the company con-

cerned and the Department of the Environment during 2011. My officials conducted an extensive search and all records held were released. The FOI decision was subject to an appeal as the requestor considered the response incomplete. This appeal resulted in a fresh search of records which affirmed the original decision, that no records of meetings referred to by the Deputy on 9 March 2011 and 15 July 2011 are held by my Department. The details requested by the Deputy regarding meetings which have taken place between the company and the Department over the last seven years are being compiled and will be forwarded to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Broadband Service Provision

1019. Deputy Niamh Smyth asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the steps he will take to resolve a matter (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24724/18]

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, 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 falls within an area which already has access to high speed broadband of at least 30 megabits per second through commercial providers. If a premises can access high speed broadband from any commercial operator that premises is considered to be served under the objectives of the NBP.

With regards to the nearby deployment of infrastructure by a company, decisions made by private telecommunication operators relating to the roll-out 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.

Broadband Service Provision

1020. Deputy Aindrias Moynihan asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment when high-speed broadband will be rolled out at a location (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24806/18]

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, 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. In April 2017 I published an updated High Speed Broadband Map which is available at www.broadband.gov.ie. This map shows the areas targeted by commercial operators to provide high speed broadband services and the areas that will be included in the State Intervention Area under the National Broadband Plan (NBP).

The Map is colour coded and searchable by address/eircode:

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

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

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

The premises referred to by the Deputy is in an AMBER area on my Department's High Speed Broadband Map. It is therefore included in the State Intervention Area under the National Broadband Plan.

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.

For those premises currently awaiting access to high speed broadband, practical initiatives will continue to be addressed through the work of the Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce to address obstacles and improve connectivity in respect of existing and future mobile phone and broadband services.

Under this Taskforce, engagement between telecommunications operators and local authorities through the Broadband Officers is continuing to strengthen. These Broadband Officers are acting as single points of contact in local authorities for their communities. The appointment of these officers is already reaping rewards in terms of ensuring a much greater degree of consistency in engagements with operators and clearing obstacles to developing infrastructure.

The Department of Rural and Community Development maintain a list of Broadband Officers, a link to which is available on my Department's website at

<https://www.dccae.gov.ie/en-ie/communications/topics/Broadband/national-broadband-plan/Pages/NBP-Information-Leaflets.aspx>

Climate Change Policy

1021. Deputy John Curran asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the progress made on the 13 recommendations of the Citizens' Assembly final report on making Ireland a leader in tackling climate change; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24854/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): I refer to the reply to Question No. 476 of 24 April 2018. The position is unchanged.

I welcomed the submission to the Oireachtas, on 18 April, of the final report of the Citizens' Assembly on how the State can make Ireland a leader in tackling climate change.

The final report includes a total of 17 recommendations, which address a range of Government policies and activities across a number of sectors and Ministerial functions. The report reflects the deliberations of the Citizens Assembly over two weekends last Autumn informed, in turn, by a public consultation and by the contribution of a range of expert presentations to

the Assembly.

As I have previously indicated, I was pleased to note that many of the recommendations adopted by the members of the Assembly, as reported on during the conclusion of this module of the Assembly's work, are already being addressed in the National Mitigation Plan and in the implementation of the Energy White Paper, but I have also acknowledged that other recommendations will need further consideration by Government.

It will now be a matter for the Oireachtas, in the first instance, to consider how it will take forward consideration of the Assembly's report. The Government will study the Assembly's report and recommendations and will provide its response in the context of the agreed mechanism in the Oireachtas for further consideration of the report.

Broadband Service Provision

1022. **Deputy Bobby Aylward** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the position regarding the provision of broadband services with speeds of at least 20 Mbps in an area (details supplied); the timeline for same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24879/18]

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, 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.

In April 2017 I published an updated High Speed Broadband Map which is available at www.broadband.gov.ie. This Map shows the areas targeted by commercial operators to provide high speed broadband services and the areas that will be included in the State Intervention Area under the National Broadband Plan. The Map is colour coded and searchable by address/eircode:

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

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

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

There are approximately 51 premises in the townland of Castlebanny. 45 (88%) fall within the AMBER area and will be served under the State led Intervention. 5 (10%) premises are in a BLUE area and will be served by commercial providers, while 1 (2%) is LIGHT BLUE and falls to be served by eir's planned rural deployment. Information on specific categories of premises can be accessed on my Department's website www.broadband.gov.ie by entering the relevant eircode into the Map.

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

now in its final stages.

In April 2017, I signed a Commitment Agreement with eir in relation to its plans to provide high speed broadband to 300,000 premises in rural areas on a commercial basis. Information on eir's planned rural deployment is available at <http://fibrerollout.ie/eircode-lookup/>. A copy of the Commitment Agreement is available on my Department's website www.dccae.gov.ie.

Quarterly updates on eir's rural deployment are published on this website. Figures for Q1 2018 are now available.

Data for Q1 2018 recently submitted by eir to my Department indicates that the company passed some 145,000 premises nationwide as part of its ongoing deployment. Eir has signalled that there would be likely knock-on effects to the 2018 milestone targets due to the severe weather impacts of both storms Ophelia and Emma. I have met with the senior management in eir and expressed to them the importance of implementing measures to catch up with milestone targets as a priority.

For those premises currently awaiting access to high speed broadband, practical initiatives will continue to be addressed through the work of the Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce to address obstacles and improve connectivity in respect of existing and future mobile phone and broadband services.

Under this Taskforce, engagement between telecommunications operators and local authorities through the Broadband Officers is continuing to strengthen. These Broadband Officers are acting as single points of contact in local authorities for their communities. The appointment of these officers is already reaping rewards in terms of ensuring a much greater degree of consistency in engagements with operators and clearing obstacles to developing infrastructure. The Department of Rural and Community Development maintain a list of Broadband Officers, a link to which is available on my Department's website at <https://www.dccae.gov.ie/en-ie/communications/topics/Broadband/national-broadband-plan/Pages/NBP-Information-Leaflets.aspx>

Question No. 1023 answered with Question No. 1004.

Question No. 1024 answered with Question No. 1014.

Broadband Service Provision

1025. Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the number of premises that completed each of the high level design and detailed design milestones in the eir contract by the end of quarter 1, 2018 compared to the target number set out for this date in the contract; the details of those whose design is completed between FTTH, eVDSL and CVDSL; the number of these premises that were included in the original contract; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25046/18]

1026. Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the latest date provided by eir for the completion of the provision of high speed broadband to 300,575 premises under the contract with his Department, in view of the delays caused by storms in 2017 and 2018; the number of premises passed to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25047/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1025 and 1026 together.

The Government's National Broadband Plan (NBP) aims to ensure high speed broadband access (minimum 30 megabits per second) to all premises in Ireland, regardless of location. The NBP has been a catalyst in encouraging investment by the telecoms sector. Today, 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.

In April 2017, I signed a Commitment Agreement with eir in relation to its plans to provide high speed broadband to 300,000 premises in rural areas on a commercial basis. Information on eir's planned rural deployment is available at <http://fibrerollout.ie>. A copy of the Commitment Agreement is available on my Department's website www.dccae.gov.ie.

Officials from my Department meet with eir on a monthly basis to review the company's performance on the on-going rollout by a number of sub-milestones. One of these sub-milestones is the number of premises for which detailed and high level design has been completed.

The latest detailed figures available to officials from my Department show eir's designs up to the end of April 2018. Under the Commitment Agreement eir committed to completing detailed and high level design for 271,000 and 295,000 premises respectively by this time. According to figures provided to my Department the company has, as of the end of April, completed detailed and high level design for 239,000 and 272,000 premises respectively. These issues have arisen as a result of the scale and complexity of this project. Officials from my Department will continue to intensively engage with eir on a monthly basis in relation to all project milestones.

Data for Q1 2018 recently verified by my Department indicates that the company has passed some 145,000 premises nationwide as part of its ongoing deployment. These premises have been passed predominantly with Fibre to the Home, with some eVDSL technology also utilised. All of these 145,000 premises are part of the original 300,000 eir agreed to pass under the Commitment Agreement.

eir has signalled that there has been some knock-on effects to the delivery of the 2018 milestone targets due to the severe weather impacts of both storms Ophelia and Emma. I have met with the senior management in eir and expressed to them the importance of implementing measures to catch up with milestone targets as a priority.

Broadband Service Provision

1027. Deputy James Lawless asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the status of rural broadband roll-out in County Kildare and in particular Kileenmore, County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25064/18]

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, 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. In April 2017 I published an updated High Speed Broadband Map which is available at www.broadband.gov.ie. This Map shows the areas targeted by commercial operators to provide high speed broadband services and the areas that will be included in the State Intervention Area under the NBP. The Map is colour coded and searchable by address and eircode:

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

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

The LIGHT BLUE areas represent eir's commercial rural deployment plans to rollout high speed broadband to 300,000 premises as part of a Commitment Agreement signed with me in April 2017 and available on my Department's website www.dccae.gov.ie

There are approximately 74 premises in the townland of Killeenmore, Co Kildare. 25 (74%) fall within the AMBER area and will be served under the State led Intervention. The remaining 9 (26%) premises are in a LIGHT BLUE area and fall to be served by eir's planned 300k rural deployment.

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

Information on eir's planned rural deployment is available at <http://fibrerollout.ie>. Quarterly updates on eir's rural deployment are published on my Department's website. Figures for Q1 2018 are now available.

Data for Q1 2018 recently verified by my Department indicates that the company passed some 145,000 premises nationwide as part of its ongoing deployment. eir has signalled that there has been knock-on effects to the 2018 milestone targets due to the severe weather impacts of both storms Ophelia and Emma. I have met with the senior management at eir and expressed to them the importance of implementing measures to catch up with milestone targets as a priority.

For those premises currently awaiting access to high speed broadband, practical initiatives will continue to be addressed through the work of the Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce to address obstacles and improve connectivity in respect of existing and future mobile phone and broadband services.

Under this Taskforce, engagement between telecommunications operators and local authorities through the Broadband Officers is continuing to strengthen. These Broadband Officers are acting as single points of contact in local authorities for their communities. The appointment of these officers is already reaping rewards in terms of ensuring a much greater degree of consistency in engagements with operators and clearing obstacles to developing infrastructure. The Department of Rural and Community Development maintain a list of Broadband Officers, a link to which is available on my Department's website at <https://www.dccae.gov.ie/en-ie/communications/topics/Broadband/national-broadband-plan/Pages/NBP-Information-Leaflets.aspx>

National Broadband Plan

1028. Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment when the contract for the roll-out of the national broadband plan will be amended; when it is expected that work on the roll-out will commence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25073/18]

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, 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. My Department is in a formal procurement process to engage a company who will roll-out a new high speed broadband network in the State intervention area. That process is now in its final stages.

For those premises currently awaiting access to high speed broadband, practical initiatives will continue to be addressed through the work of the Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce to address obstacles and improve connectivity in respect of existing and future mobile phone and broadband services.

Under this Taskforce, engagement between telecommunications operators and local authorities through the Broadband Officers is continuing to strengthen. These Broadband Officers are acting as single points of contact in local authorities for their communities. The appointment of these officers is already reaping rewards in terms of ensuring a much greater degree of consistency in engagements with operators and clearing obstacles to developing infrastructure. The Department of Rural and Community Development maintain a list of Broadband Officers, a link to which is available on my Department's website at <https://www.dccae.gov.ie/en-ie/communications/topics/Broadband/national-broadband-plan/Pages/NBP-Information-Leaflets.aspx>

Broadcasting Sector

1029. Deputy Sean Fleming asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment when permission will be given to RTÉ to transmit RTÉ 2 +1 on a platform (details supplied); when applications for this were made; the process involved before he can give permission; the length of time this process has taken to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25163/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): Section 103 of the Broadcasting Act 2009 provides that a corporation requires my consent for new services and variations in channels. Any proposed variation will be subjected to detailed examination by my Department, consultation with relevant stakeholders and a sectorial impact assessment by the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland. The process takes in the region of 6 months to complete.

Section 103(8) of the Act outlines the matters any proposed variation of services must take into consideration including the public service objects of the corporation, the costs associated with the proposal and the extent to which the proposed services will be accessible by the public.

However, to date, I have not received any formal proposal from RTÉ requesting permission to transmit a RTÉ2 +1 channel as referred to by the Deputy.

Commencement of Legislation

1030. Deputy Mattie McGrath asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the sections and parts of all legislation brought forward by his Department in each of the past four years that have yet to be commenced; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25173/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis

Naughten): There are three Acts for which all sections have yet to be formally commenced by my Department. The details are set out in the following table.

Title of Act	Section(s) not yet commenced	Purpose of section(s)	Reason for delay in commencement
Energy Act 2016	Provisions not yet commenced are Sections 8 and 19.	Section 8 of the Energy Act provides for a revised legal definition of the existing Single Electricity Market (SEM) in the Electricity Regulation Act 1999, as amended. Section 19 places a statutory obligation on the Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU) to produce a Strategy Statement every three years in respect of its energy and safety remit	Section 7 of the Energy Act (which was commenced on enactment) provided for certain transitional measures for the Single Electricity Market (SEM) that operate during the interim period until go live date of the Integrated Single Electricity Market (I-SEM). Section 8 of the Act, in relation to I-SEM, will be commenced when the new market goes live and operational in October of this year and the transitional arrangements will cease. The commencement of section 19 was deferred on the basis that the Commission for Regulation of Utilities' current strategic plan covering 2014 to 2018 covers energy, energy safety and water up to, and inclusive of, 2018. Section 19 of the Act will be commenced with effect from 1st July 2018. Consequently, the Commission for Regulation of Utilities will complete their new Strategy Statement covering the period 2019-2021 and submit it to the Minister in order for it to be laid before the Oireachtas, within the six month period stated in the Energy Act.

Questions - Written Answers

Title of Act	Section(s) not yet commenced	Purpose of section(s)	Reason for delay in commencement
Telecommunications Services (Ducting and Cables) Act 2018	All	To provide for the vesting in the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment of ownership of certain ducting and cables; to provide for the vesting in the Minister of certain legal interests relating to ducting and cables for the purposes of the performance of any of his or her functions for telecommunications purposes; to provide for compensation; to provide for certain obligations; and to provide for related matters.	Enactment of the legislation was required to provide the requisite access rights across land through which the Galway Mayo telecommunications duct runs so that a Managed Service Entity can be appointed to operate, maintain and access the network. The procurement process is under development. The sections of the Act are expected to be commenced on appointment of the Management Services Entity.
Minerals Development Act 2017	With the exception of Section 212 in relation to deemed cancellation of registration of excepted minerals which took effect on the date of passage of the Act, all other sections have not yet commenced. (256 Sections).	The Minerals Development Act 2017, which was enacted on the 26 July 2017, will make further and better provisions for the development of minerals in the State and repeal the Minerals Development Acts 1940 to 1999. Parts 1 and 2 of the Act provide for the principles, policies and procedures for the regulating of mineral exploration and development. In order to commence these Parts detailed regulations are currently being drafted and it is expected that they will be completed in Q2 2018. It will then be possible to commence these parts of the Act.	The remaining Parts of the Act relating to Mining and Rehabilitation will be commenced once the detailed Regulations have been drafted to allow commencement. It is expected that this will happen in Q1 2019.

Broadband Service Provision

1031. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment when high-speed broadband will be rolled out in an area (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25189/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): The National Broadband Plan (NBP) aims to deliver high speed access (minimum 30 megabits per second) to all premises in Ireland regardless of location. The NBP has been a catalyst in encouraging investment by the telecoms sector. 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 under the NBP. All 9 premises within the townland of Parkmore (Templemartin) Co Cork are in the AMBER area on my Department's

High Speed Broadband Map, which is available at www.broadband.gov.ie. They are therefore included in the State led Intervention under the 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 in order to provide access to high speed broadband to households such as the premises in question. That procurement process is now in its final stages.

I fully recognise the importance of availability of high speed connectivity for all premises in Ireland including the townland referenced by the Deputy and sincerely appreciate the frustration for communities and businesses that do not currently have access to this level of connectivity. Delivering connectivity to these premises 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.dccae.gov.ie/en-ie/communications/topics/Broadband/national-broadband-plan/Pages/NBP-Information-Leaflets.aspx>

Renewable Energy Incentives

1032. Deputy Pat Casey asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment when the renewable heat incentive, RHI, scheme for renewable energy equipment will be announced; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25225/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): The Support Scheme for Renewable Heat was approved by Government in December 2017. The details of the scheme, including the tariffs that will apply, are published on my Department's website. As with all such schemes, engagement with the European Commission under EU State Aid approval processes is necessary, and my Department is engaging with the European Commission regarding approval for the scheme. The Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) will administer the scheme and is currently developing the detailed Terms and Conditions. An allocation of €7 million has been provided for the scheme in Budget 2018. In addition, the National Development Plan sets out an indicative funding allocation of €300 million for the rollout of the scheme for the period 2018-2027.

The scheme is planned to commence operation later this year subject to State Aid approval.

Questions Nos. 1033 and 1034 answered with Question No. 1008.

Aquaculture Regulation

1035. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment when Inland Fisheries Ireland was notified of the escape of 20,000 farmed salmon at a salmon farm located at Glinsk, Mulroy Bay, County Donegal in 2017; the person or body that notified Inland Fisheries Ireland; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25385/18]

1036. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment when the farmed salmon stock captured from the Bunowen, Erriff and Bundorragha catchments were handed over to Inland Fisheries Ireland for inspection; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25386/18]

1037. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his views on whether it is possible that the farmed salmon stock captured in the western river basin district in August and September 2017 may have originated from a salmon escape at Glinsk, Mulroy Bay, County Donegal in July 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25387/18]

1038. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if Inland Fisheries Ireland has been contacted by the Marine Institute regarding the findings of its report (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25388/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Seán Kyne): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1035 to 1038, inclusive, together.

A report regarding escapes from a fish farm in Donegal was sent via e-mail to Inland Fisheries Ireland's generic e-mail address: info@fisheriesireland.ie by the Technical Manager of the licensee of the fish farm on 4 July 2017. Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) has reviewed its protocols to ensure that reports are submitted to specific nominated individuals rather than the generic email used by the licensee on this occasion.

The competent Authority for the licensing of Aquaculture is the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) and IFI has sought a report from that Department concerning an escape of some 20,000 salmon from Marine Harvests Glinsk sea site in Mulroy Bay, Co. Donegal in July 2017. The report requested is expected to address action taken and recommendations made by DAFM and implemented by the licensee following the report of this large escape.

In relation to the potential origin of farmed salmon stock captured in the Western River Basin District in 2017, I am advised by IFI that it is not possible to definitively assign the escapees to an individual farm. However the reported average weight of the escapees at the Glinsk Farm in July 2017 was significantly less than the fish recovered in the Western River basin District in August and September 2017 indicating they were at a different stage in the production cycle. The Department of Agriculture Food and Marine, as the competent authority for the regulation of aquaculture, may be best placed to offer a view on this issue.

Two suspected farmed salmon were captured on the Bunowen river on 8 September 2017. Data on length/weight and scale samples were provided to IFI. Two escaped salmon were captured on the Bundorragha River on 4 September 2017 and handed over to IFI on 5 September.

The first escaped farmed salmon was captured on Beat 9 on the Erriff river on 3 September 2017 and handed over to IFI on 9 September. Two escapees were recorded in the upstream trap on the Erriff on 7th September and a third fish was recorded on 24 September. All three fish were retained for analysis. All fish entering the Erriff system upstream of Beat 9 (tidal) must pass through the Erriff trap at Aasleagh Falls where they are monitored.

IFI completed the report referred to be the Deputy in January 2018. I am advised that IFI

have not been contacted by the Marine Institute in relation to this report

<http://www.fisheriesireland.ie/documents/1485-ifi-report-on-escape-of-farmed-salmon-in-western-rivers-in-2017/file.html>

Waste Disposal Charges

1039. Deputy Róisín Shortall asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the usage element contained in the new waste collection charges; if steps will be taken to protect older and disadvantaged householders who may only put their black bin out every four to five weeks; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25539/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): Last summer, I established the Price Monitoring Group to monitor pricing developments for residential household waste collection services during the phasing out of flat rate fees. The Group is chaired by Mr Frank Conway, an independent financial expert. The membership of the Group also includes a statistician from the Central Statistics Office and Shelfwatch, an independent price monitoring group. The Group monitors 26 service providers; this comprises 19 individual companies with several of those being monitored in more than one area. I have recently decided to extend the operation of the Price Monitoring Group to the end of the year to continue monitoring pricing developments. The Chair of the Price Monitoring Group, Mr Conway, has recently reported to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Communications, Climate Action and Environment that while fluctuations in prices and service offerings have been observed, the overall trend is relative price stability for householders. 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’.

The Price Monitoring Group is displaying the prices for each company that it monitors and it has published detailed data on the prices it is tracking on a monthly basis. The most recent analysis from April was published on 25 May 2018 and is available on my Department’s website.

The charges applied by waste management companies are subject to compliance with all applicable environmental and other relevant legislation, including contract and consumer legislation.

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. 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.

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.

Questions - Written Answers
Capital Expenditure Programme

1040. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his Department's capital allocation in each of the years 2019 to 2023; and the areas to which funds will be allocated in each of those years. [25566/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): My Department will oversee significant capital investment amounting to €1.27 billion over period 2019 to 2022. Annual capital ceilings in respect of this four year period were published in the National Development Plan, and are set out in the table following. The 2023 capital ceiling for my Department will be agreed and published later this year as part of the Estimates process for Budget 2019.

Year	Capital Ceiling
2019	€256m
2020	€297m
2021	€317m
2022	€400m

Detailed programme allocations for each of the years 2019 to 2023 will be agreed as part of the annual Estimates process and published in the Revised Estimates Volume subsequent to each Budget Day. During the period, my Department and its agencies will play a lead role in the delivery of a number of the strategic investment priorities identified in the National Development Plan.

An ambitious programme of climate action measures, including energy-related investments by commercial State companies, will position Ireland on a sustainable trajectory to achieve a low-carbon and climate-resilient economy and society. A significant expansion of investment in energy efficiency upgrades, including deep retrofitting of housing, commercial and public building stock, will accelerate the contribution of the built environment to the collective effort to reduce CO₂ emissions. Other key energy measures include the rollout of the Support Scheme for Renewable Heat and an expansion of the Electric Vehicle Grant Scheme which are aimed at promoting the electrification of heat and transport, along with increased investment in energy research.

Delivery of the new high speed broadband network under the National Broadband Plan, which is currently in the final stages of procurement, will ensure that the opportunities presented by the digital transformation are available to every citizen, company and community in Ireland.

Investments will also be focused on supporting the transition to a circular and resource efficient economy and protecting our environment, while ensuring the sustainable management of our natural resources.

Seismic Surveys

1041. **Deputy Eamon Ryan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the number and type of licences and seismic survey activities for which he has exercised his power under the European Union (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Petroleum Exploration) Regulations 2013 to request an environmental impact assessment, EIA, or a stage 2 appropriate assessment, AA, for exploration activities; the number of seismic surveys and li-

cences that have been determined as requiring an EIA or stage 2 AA by month, year and area (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25689/18]

1042. **Deputy Eamon Ryan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the number and type of exploration activities for which he has exercised his power under the European Union (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Petroleum Exploration) Regulations 2013 to request an Environmental Impact Assessment, EIA, or stage 2 appropriate assessment, AA; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25690/18]

1043. **Deputy Eamon Ryan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if his Department has conducted a cumulative analysis of seismic impacts on Irish sea life from 2011 to 2017 and to date in 2018. [25691/18]

1044. **Deputy Eamon Ryan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the amount of seismic surveys that have been conducted in Irish waters since 2011; the level of environmental assessment each received; if powers under European Union (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Petroleum Exploration) Regulations 2013 to request an EIA or stage 2 AA for exploration activities were exercised; if these assessments included a cumulative assessment of seismic activity over a number of years by year, month, area and licence or permission (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25692/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Seán Kyne): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1041 to 1044, inclusive, together.

In advance of the 2015 Atlantic Margin Licensing Round, the Irish Offshore Strategic Environmental Assessment 5 process was undertaken by my Department and included consideration of potential environmental impacts which may arise specifically as a result of petroleum exploration activities.

Any exploration activity proposed to be carried out under a petroleum authorisation (e.g. a seismic survey or drilling of a well) is subject to assessment of compliance with the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Directive, the Habitats Directive and the Birds Directive.

Geophysical surveys (which include seismic surveys) do not fall under Annex I or II of the EIA Directive as amended. However, such surveys fall to be assessed under the European Union (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Petroleum Exploration) Regulations 2013 (S.I. 134/2013). An assessment is carried out based on the information included in the application to determine whether a survey would require preparation of an Environmental Impact Assessment Report if it is considered that it would result in significant effects on the environment by virtue, *inter alia*, of the nature, size and location of the survey.

Applications for seismic surveys are considered against a range of technical and environmental considerations, and in respect of environmental considerations the procedures are as follows:

The applicant must submit an Environmental Risk Assessment and a Natura Impact Screening (Appropriate Assessment) Statement in support of the application to commence surveying activities including consideration of cumulative effects. These documents are made available on my Department's website.

The Environmental Risk Assessment is reviewed for my Department by an independent consultancy, with the required expertise in ecological and conservation marine biology, to assess whether or not it meets the scope and quality of requirements set out or implied by the specific European and Irish Environmental Impact Assessment legislation and guidelines. The independent consultancy also reviews the Natura Impact Screening Statement to ensure that the

Questions - Written Answers

requirements of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations, 2011 for an assessment to be carried out on any plan or project likely to have a significant effect on a protected site or species have been met. In addition, the National Parks and Wildlife Service is requested to provide its observations in terms of Natura 2000 sites, where relevant, and Annex IV species (Cetaceans) in accordance with the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC).

Following receipt of these reviews a determination is made as to whether an Environmental Impact Assessment Report or a stage 2 Appropriate Assessment is required. The determination is published on my Department's website.

Any observations received from prescribed bodies, interested parties or the general public regarding the potential environmental effects of the activity proposed in the application are considered as part of the consent decision making process.

The following table outlines seismic surveys carried out in the Irish offshore over the period 2011 to date.

Month and year that survey commenced	Survey area name	Relevant Petroleum Authorisation	Survey Identification	Company	Contractor
05/2011	Porcupine Basin	EL1/04	2011/01	San Leon Energy	PGS
06/2011	Celtic Sea	LO08/1, PP1/10	2011/02	Providence Resources	Polarcus
07/2011	Celtic Sea	EL5/08	2011/03	Lansdowne Celtic Sea	Polarcus
07/2011	Celtic Sea	EL5/07	2011/04	Lansdowne Celtic Sea	Polarcus
07/2011	Celtic Sea	EL4/07	2011/05	Lansdowne Celtic Sea	Polarcus
07/2011	Porcupine Basin	EL4/08	2011/06	Providence Resources	Polarcus
07/2012	Slyne Basin	Corrib Lease, PPL1/12	2012/01	Shell E&P Ireland	Reservoir Exploration Technology
03/2013	Slyne Basin	Corrib Lease, PPL1/12	2013/01	Shell E & P Ireland Limited	Reservoir Exploration Technology
04/2013	North Celtic Sea Basin Deep Kinsale	PPL5/13	2013/02	Fastnet Oil and Gas (Ireland) Limited	CGG Veritas
05/2013	Mizzen Basin North Celtic Sea Basin	PPL5/13	2013/03	Fastnet Oil and Gas (Ireland) Limited	CGG Veritas
05/2013	Atlantic Margin Basin Offshore West of Ireland	PPL1/13	2013/04	ENI Ireland BV	BGP

Month and year that survey commenced	Survey area name	Relevant Petroleum Authorisation	Survey Identification	Company	Contractor
07/2013	North Celtic Sea and Fast-net Basin	PPL2/13	2013/07	PGS Exploration (UK) Ltd	PGS
07/2013	Porcupine Basin	PPL8/13	2013/05	Kosmos Energy Ireland	Polarcus
10/2013	Porcupine Basin	PPL8/13	2013/06	Kosmos Energy Ireland	Polarcus
04/2014	West of Ireland	PPL1/13	2014/01	ENI Ireland	BGP
07/2014	Porcupine Basin	PPL2/14	2014/02	Polarcus	Polarcus
08/2014	Porcupine Basin	EL1/14, PPL3/14	2014/03	Capricorn Ireland	Dolphin Geophysical
08/2014	Porcupine Basin	PPL4/14	2014/04	Seabird Exploration	Harrier Navigation
03/2015	Porcupine Basin	PPL5/14	2015/01	Searcher Seismic	JSC MAGE
07/2015	North Celtic Sea Basin	PPL4/14	2015/02	Seabird Exploration	JSC MAGE
05/2016	East Porcupine Basin	PPL2/16	2016/01	Woodside Energy Pty Ltd	PGS
05/2016	North Porcupine Basin	PPL2/16, FEL 3/14 and 5/14	2016/02	Woodside Energy Pty Ltd	PGS
06/2016	Porcupine Basin	PPL5/16	2016/03	CGG Services SA	CGG
07/2016	South Porcupine Basin	PPL5/16	2016/04	CGG Services SA	CGG
04/2017	South Porcupine Basin	PPL5/16	2017/01	CGG Services SA	CGG
05/2017	South Porcupine Basin	PPL5/16	2017/02	CGG Services SA	CGG
05/2017	Porcupine Basin (North)	PPL5/16	2017/03	CGG Services SA	CGG
07/2017	Porcupine Basin	PPL8/16	2017/04	TGS - NO-PEC Geophysical Company ASA	Shearwater Geoservices

In the period 2011 to date individual seismic survey and drilling applications have been determined as not requiring an Environmental Impact Assessment Report or a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment.

In evaluating applications for consent to undertake a seismic survey consideration is given to the potential cumulative effects of the survey.

All consented surveys must comply with temporal restrictions and risk management measures as well as MMO visual-based detection, as contained in “Guidance to Manage the Risk to Marine Mammals from Man-made Sound Sources in Irish Waters”, produced by the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

Seismic Surveys

1045. Deputy Eamon Ryan asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the number of seismic surveys that will be conducted in 2018 in Irish waters; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25693/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Seán Kyne): No application to conduct a seismic survey in the Irish Offshore in 2018 has been received or consented to. The following applications to conduct site surveys in the Irish Offshore in 2018 are currently under consideration:

- Application submitted by Providence Resources Plc to conduct a Seabed Debris Clearance, Environmental Baseline and Habitat Assessment Site Survey on Frontier Exploration Licence 6/14. The proposed site survey includes a geophysical survey element; and

- Application submitted by Shell Exploration and Production Ireland Ltd to conduct geophysical and visual Corrib Subsea Inspection, Maintenance and Infrastructure Renewal Surveys.

Details of these applications are available on my Department’s website.

Exploration Licences

1046. Deputy Eamon Ryan asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the commitments his Department has made on work programmes for exploration licences and their extensions (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25694/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Seán Kyne): In making an application for an Exploration Licence; to extend the duration of a phase of an existing Exploration Licence; or to enter a new phase of an existing Exploration Licence the applicant must propose work programme commitments which will progress knowledge of the petroleum prospectivity of the licensed area. Evaluation of such work programme commitments by my Department forms one element of the application consideration process.

Work programme commitments will consist of activities such as the purchase or re-interpretation of existing data, geochemical and bio-stratigraphic studies, site surveys, the acquisition of 2D or 3D seismic data or the drilling of a well. The details of such work programmes are by their nature commercially sensitive.

It should be noted that an application to undertake a seismic survey or to drill a well on an Exploration Licence pursuant to a work programme commitment is subject to a separate consent process.

Seismic Surveys

1047. Deputy Eamon Ryan asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if his Department will be making changes to guidelines for ocean seismic testing in view of new evidence published in 2017 and 2018 on the deadly impacts it can have on krill and zooplankton populations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25695/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Seán Kyne): The Government's integrated marine plan "Harnessing Our Ocean Wealth" recognises the importance of Ireland's rich marine biodiversity and ecosystems. The Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment, as regulator of petroleum authorisations, including seismic surveys, aims to ensure that such surveys are carried out in an environmentally sustainable manner. Applications to undertake seismic surveys are assessed in accordance with the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive, the Habitats Directive and the Birds Directive. An evaluation of the potential environmental effects of any proposed seismic survey is carried out by my Department's independent environmental consultants.

Consultation also takes place with the National Parks and Wildlife Service to provide its observations in terms of Natura 2000 sites, where relevant, and Annex IV species (Cetaceans) in accordance with the Habitats Directive. The Department positively engages with other international regulators and is informed and mindful of scientific studies relating to the sector. Policy and practices are regularly reviewed in accordance with international best practice in this area.

Bioenergy Strategy Publication

1048. Deputy Eamon Ryan asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment further to Parliamentary Questions Nos. 1146 of 21 March 2017 and 215 of 13 December 2017, when the strategic environmental assessment of the national bioenergy plan, which was drafted in 2014 and has remained in draft form since, will be published and put to public consultation; the reason for the disruption to the timeframe stated in the March 2017 reply; and the reason for the disruption to the timeframe stated in the December 2017 reply. [25697/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): There are a wide range of Government Departments, agencies and State bodies that are critical enablers for the development of bioenergy by virtue of their responsibility for areas such as forestry, agriculture, waste, research funding and business development. The draft Bio-energy Plan sets out the policy areas that must be coordinated to support the development of the bioenergy sector in Ireland. It identifies a range of supply-side and demand-side measures that are needed to release the full potential of the domestic biomass sector in Ireland.

Since the draft Bioenergy Plan was published in 2014, significant progress has been made in finalising the plan and on the actions set out under the plan.

Developments such as the publication of the Energy White Paper, the National Mitigation Plan and the National Policy Statement on the Bioeconomy have provided an updated policy context. As a result the draft Bioenergy Plan is being updated to reflect these and other policy developments. An updated Strategic Environmental Assessment and NATURA Impact Statement are also currently being finalised. In parallel, progress continues in relation to the key actions set out under the plan.

In this regard, I have secured Government approval for the Support Scheme for Renewable

Heat - a key demand-side measure. I expect the scheme to commence operation later this year subject to State Aid approval. The objective of the scheme is to increase the level of renewable energy and reduce emissions in the heat sector. By stimulating demand for renewable energy feedstock, such as biomass, the scheme will provide an opportunity for the growth of indigenous bioenergy production.

In addition, I recently published a Policy Statement outlining the future development of the Biofuels Obligation Scheme. The scheme has been the primary policy measure used to increase the share of renewable energy in the transport sector and has also made a significant contribution to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The Policy Statement is intended to provide certainty to industry and stakeholders thus facilitating the longer term planning necessary to increase the use of biofuels. One of the actions is an increase in the Biofuel Obligation Rate to 10% by volume with effect from 1 January 2019.

Supply-side measures, such as support for bioenergy crops, come within the remit of my colleague, the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine. I would highlight the recent significant increase in supports under the Forestry for Fibre Scheme that were made as part of the mid-term review of the Forestry Programme. These supports will provide an increased incentive for those landowners considering planting forestry to supply the energy sector.

I expect the updated draft Bioenergy Plan and associated assessments to be published for public consultation this summer in order to finalise the plan later this year.

Fines Data

1049. Deputy Michael McGrath asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the EU fines paid in each of the years 2015 to 2017, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25728/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): My Department has not been liable for or paid EU fines in any of the years 2015 to 2017.

Road Safety

1050. Deputy Anne Rabbitte asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if his Department received applications from Galway County Council to extend the speed limit at a school (details supplied) on the grounds of speed and health and safety for persons locally using the school in each of the years 2010 to 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24589/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Under the Road Traffic Acts, a Special Speed Limit may, as in the case detailed above, include a periodic speed limit which can be designed to apply and operate outside schools at specified periods, for example when children are arriving at, or leaving a school during term time.

Statutory responsibility for the making of Special Speed Limit bye-laws is a matter for the elected members of local authorities, in this case Galway County Council, subject to the consent of Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) in the case of national roads.

To assist local authorities in the application of Special Speed Limits, my Department's *Guidelines for Setting and Managing Speed Limits in Ireland* provide detailed guidance on the

application of Special Speed Limits outside of schools and is available to all local authorities.

As such, my Department would not receive applications from local authorities to extend speed limits. The matter referred to would be dealt with directly by Galway County Council in consultation with TII.

Road Safety

1051. Deputy Anne Rabbitte asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if the Galway County Council roads department applied to the Department of Justice and Equality or the local Garda division for a reduction in the speed limit on the N17 at a school (details supplied) due to health and safety concerns outlined by the board of management, parents and teaching staff; if so, when the application was submitted; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24611/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As the Deputy is aware, statutory responsibility for the making of Special Speed Limit bye-laws is a matter for the elected members of local authorities, in this case Galway County Council, and subject to the consent of Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) in the case of national roads. The process includes local consultation, by means of press advertising, in advance of any new Special Speed Limit being introduced.

As such, my Department would not receive, nor expect to receive, applications from local authorities to extend speed limits. The matter referred to would be dealt with directly by Galway County Council in consultation with TII.

Road Improvement Schemes

1052. Deputy Anne Rabbitte asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if a detailed design has been carried out by Galway County Council and submitted to TII for funding on the R333 at Claretuam; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24690/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The improvement and maintenance of regional and local roads is the statutory responsibility of the relevant County or City Council, in accordance with the provisions of Section 13 of the Roads Act 1993. TII's remit relates to national roads not regional and local roads.

Works on regional and local roads are funded from the Council's own resources supplemented by road grants provided by my Department. The initial selection and prioritisation of works to be funded is a matter for each Council.

My Department's regional and local road grant programmes include the Bridge Rehabilitation Grant scheme and the Safety Improvement Works scheme. Under both programmes local authorities submit a list of projects in order of priority for consideration for funding. Within the constraints of the overall roads budget, allocations are then made to local authorities. The grant allocation to Galway County Council this year includes €100,000 for Bridge Rehabilitation works at Coheenaheeny, Headford on the R333, and €25,000 for Safety Improvement works at Crossura Junction on R333 (main Tuam to Headford road) with the L6134.

As regards any proposal for upgrading the R333 near Claretuam, before the financial crisis, local authorities could apply on a regular basis for grants for Specific Improvement Grants for the strengthening, widening or realignment of rural roads, including bridges, where the

proposed scheme cost generally less than €5 million. However, the extent of the cutbacks in grant funding during the crisis meant this grant scheme had to be curtailed after 2013 because expenditure on maintenance/renewal was falling well short of what was required to adequately maintain the regional and local road network.

The Capital Plan does provide for the gradual build up in funding for the road network but it will take some years yet to reach the level required for the adequate maintenance and renewal of the network. For this reason there is limited scope at present for funding projects under the Specific Grant Programme.

Any projects proposed by local authorities for consideration under the Specific Grant Programme are assessed by the Department on a case-by-case basis. All projects put forward by local authorities for consideration must comply with the requirements of the Public Spending Code and my Department's Capital Appraisal Framework and it is important for local authorities to prioritise projects within their overall area of responsibility with these requirements in mind.

Road Improvement Schemes

1053. Deputy Anne Rabbitte asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if a design plan has been completed by Galway County Council and submitted to TII for the upgrade of the N54; when it will be part of the funding allocation by Galway County Council in 2019 for major road works; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24739/18]

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 under the Roads Acts 1993-2015 in conjunction with the local authorities concerned. Within its capital budget, the assessment and prioritisation of individual projects is a matter in the first instance for TII in accordance with Section 19 of the Roads Act.

Noting the above position, I have referred the Deputy's question to TII for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you don't receive a reply within 10 working days.

Road Improvement Schemes

1054. Deputy Anne Rabbitte asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if a design plan being completed by Galway County Council and submitted to TII for the upgrade of the N17 at a school (details supplied); if it will be part of the funding allocation by Galway County Council in 2019 for road safety realignment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24740/18]

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 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.

Fuel Oil Specifications

1055. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if a ban on the use of heavy fuel oil in the Irish Sea will be implemented; if so, when it will be implemented; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24767/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Regulation of emissions from maritime fuels in shipping comes under both EU legislation and IMO (International Maritime Organisation - part of the United Nations) obligations. Ireland complies fully with both EU and IMO requirements.

In that context, I am not aware of any proposals or discussions at EU or IMO levels to ban the use of heavy fuels oil in the Irish Sea.

In the EU, the relevant legislation is Directive 2012/33/EU which amended Council Directive 1999/32/EC as regards the sulphur content of marine fuels.

These EU Directives align EU legislation with the related IMO obligations. They were given effect in Irish law by the European Union (Sulphur Content of Marine Fuels) Regulations 2015 (S.I. No. 361 of 2015).

The IMO obligations, which arise from the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, were given effect in Irish law by the Sea Pollution (Prevention of Air Pollution from Ships) Regulations 2010 (S.I. No. 313 of 2010).

Arising from all of the above obligations, the sulphur content of any fuel oil used on board ships in Irish waters has, and will continue to be reduced over time as follows:

- (a) 4.50% by mass prior to 1 January 2012;

- (b) 3.50% by mass on and after 1 January 2012; and

- (c) 0.50% by mass on and after 1 January 2020.

However, notwithstanding the above, passenger ships operating in Irish waters, shall ensure that the sulphur content of marine fuel used on board such passenger ships does not exceed 1.50 per cent by mass until 31 December 2019, and 0.50 per cent by mass thereafter.

Road Traffic Offences

1056. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the full range of legal punishments applying to motorists who drive without insurance that are available to An Garda Síochána; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25018/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Section 41 of the Road Traffic Act 1994 empowers An Garda Síochána to detain, store, release, or dispose of vehicles in certain specified circumstances including if the vehicle is not insured, or An Garda Síochána reasonably believe it to be uninsured, in contravention of Section 56 (1) of the Road Traffic Act 1961.

When a Garda detects a motorist driving uninsured, a summons to Court is issued to the

driver, and any subsequent sanctions against the motorist are up to the Court to decide.

Driving without motor insurance in Ireland is punishable by a fine of up to €5,000, disqualification from driving and up to six months imprisonment, on conviction. Where a driver is convicted of an offence under section 56 of the Road Traffic Act 1961, the presiding Judge shall make an a consequential disqualification order under section 26 of the Act. However, the Judge may, in the case of a first offence under the section, where he or she is satisfied that a special reason has been proved by the convicted person, decline to make a consequential disqualification order. In such cases, 5 penalty points are endorsed on the driver record of the person so convicted.

Road Traffic Offences Data

1057. Deputy Robert Troy asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of penalty points that have been issued for driving without insurance in each of the years 2013 to 2017, by county in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25020/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The details requested by the Deputy are provided in the following tabular statement.

Number of penalty points recorded on the National Vehicle and Driver File (NVDF) for driving without insurance in each of the years 2013 to 2017 by county.

COUNTY	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
CARLOW	32	32	37	33	20
CAVAN	72	75	79	121	71
CLARE	99	116	109	103	120
CORK	247	204	279	292	372
DONEGAL	100	120	124	136	135
DUBLIN	580	714	791	808	1,185
GALWAY	141	167	167	177	190
KERRY	33	52	61	78	109
KILDARE	102	129	132	149	194
KILKENNY	38	40	34	44	27
LAOIS	44	68	55	70	96
LEITRIM	8	18	13	11	12
LIMERICK	117	100	166	200	176
LONGFORD	42	52	57	72	59
LOUTH	86	73	63	68	102
MAYO	33	34	28	42	36
MEATH	63	90	87	105	217
MONA GHAN	30	41	31	83	44
OFFALY	58	65	60	75	94
ROS COM - MON	31	44	29	37	43
SLIGO	29	34	26	27	41
TIPPERARY	116	118	130	100	104

COUNTY	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
W A T E R - FORD	43	81	86	80	64
WESTMEA TH	58	83	61	109	135
WEXFORD	47	43	69	45	157
WICKLOW	41	75	53	48	60
F O R E I G N L I C E N C E H O L D E R	54	98	164	182	200
UNKNOWN	20	20	20	23	19
Total	2,364	2,786	3,011	3,318	4,082

Bus Services

1058. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to support an increased service for the 101 Bus Éireann route with particular reference to the village of Balrothery in Fingal, which is only served by this bus and does not have another bus or rail service for its growing population; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25336/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The National Transport Authority (NTA) has advised that Bus Éireann operates Route 101 under a public service contract.

The service links Balrothery to the Dublin Airport and the City Centre as well as Balbriggan and Drogheda. The service provides 36 weekday departures in each direction with a bus every 20 minutes in the morning and evening peak, and every 30 minutes off peak.

While there are no immediate plans to revise the service, the NTA in conjunction with Bus Éireann is due to review the services along the M1 Corridor in late 2018.

Greenways Development

1059. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of the development of the greenway from Sligo to Enniskillen; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24240/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): My Department does not have an open funding call for greenways at present but it is in the process of developing a National Strategy for the future development of Greenways.

The Greenways Strategy will provide a framework for the development of Ireland's greenways and will determine the type of project to be funded by my Department over the coming decade. This is a long term Strategy with the aim of increasing the number, length and regional spread of greenways across the country. It will set out guidance to project promoters on matters including strategic nature, length, design standards, accommodation works and early consultation with communities and land owners along proposed routes.

This will be followed by call for applications later in 2018 with a view to awarding funding to a number of projects for drawdown between 2019 to 2021. In this regard, I was pleased

to secure additional funding for greenways last year bringing the total available for the period 2018 to 2021 to €55.9m.

Given the increased interest in greenways in recent years I expect that there will be a strong response to this funding call. I would urge potential applicants for funding to progress their planning and design of greenways as far as possible in advance of any application for funding and to resolve any land ownership issues.

Railway Stations

1060. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport further to Parliamentary Question No. 508 of 22 May 2018, when funding will be available to progress the scheme in view of the fact that planning permission was granted in October 2017. [24295/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As indicated in my reply to the Deputy's Parliamentary Question No. 508 of 22 May 2018, issues relating to the provision of infrastructure at train stations on the heavy rail network outside of the Greater Dublin Area and the cities - such as the matter of a bridge at Carlow train station - are an operational matter for Iarnród Éireann which receives Exchequer funding via the National Transport Authority (NTA).

I understand that following my referral of the Deputy's question, the NTA informed the Deputy in correspondence dated 24th May 2018 that with planning permission in place the NTA will fund the project and that it is expected that the footbridge will be completed by mid 2019.

Sports Capital Programme Applications

1061. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if an approved sports capital grant application (details supplied) has now been finalised; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24394/18]

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.

Roads Maintenance Funding

1062. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if emergency funding will be provided to Kerry County Council (details supplied) for road maintenance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24460/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The improvement and

maintenance of regional and local roads is the statutory responsibility of local authorities, in accordance with the provisions of Section 13 of the Roads Act 1993. Works on those roads are funded from the Council's own resources supplemented by State road grants. The initial selection and prioritisation of works to be funded is also a matter for the local authority.

Within the budget available to the Department, grant funding is allocated on as fair and equitable basis as possible. In this context, grants in the main grant categories, including restoration maintenance, are allocated based on the length of regional and local roads within a local authority area of responsibility and it is envisaged that grants will continue to be made available on that basis. My Department allocates funding at local authority level and allocations to individual Municipal Districts are a matter for the Council.

I announced the 2018 regional and local road allocations on 29th January and all grant funding available to my Department has now been allocated. It is a matter for each Council to determine its priorities and decide its work programme taking available grant funding and its own resources into account. I always stress to Councils the importance of prioritising roads when allocating their own resources.

Grant Payments

1063. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the grants available for taxi operators to purchase wheelchair accessible vehicles; the eligibility for persons who wish to apply for grant aid to purchase wheelchair accessible vehicles; and if these grants are available to individual drivers planning to purchase one vehicle in addition to taxi companies that may wish to purchase multiple vehicles. [24506/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The regulation of the small public service vehicle (SPSV) industry is a matter for the National Transport Authority (NTA) under the provisions of the *Taxi Regulation Act 2013*. The NTA also administers the wheelchair accessible vehicle (WAV) grant scheme for the SPSV sector.

Accordingly, I have referred your questions to the NTA for direct reply to you. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a response within 10 working days.

Programme for Government Implementation

1064. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of the implementation of the Programme for A Partnership Government as it applies to his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24582/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The Programme for Government Annual Report 2018 was recently approved by Government and I understand it will be published shortly and available to view.

The Annual Report will obviously contain a detailed progress report on all of my Department's commitments and I am pleased to report good progress generally.

In advance of that publication, please find below a snapshot of activity in 2017 across the different sectors under my Department's remit -

Aviation

An additional €17 million was secured under the 2017 Mid-Term Review of the Capital Plan for regional airports, considerably in excess of the €10 million originally mooted in the Programme for Government, while more than €5.5 million was allocated under the Regional Airports Programme in 2017 itself.

Public Transport

In October increased multi-annual capital investment funding envelopes were announced as part of the Budget which will provide an enhanced capital envelope of €2.7 billion for public transport investment between 2018 and 2021. In 2017 the new Luas CrossCity was completed and commenced services.

Roads

In September the M17/M18 Gort to Tuam PPP road scheme was opened ahead of schedule and in October an additional €4.2 billion was announced for capital expenditure on roads over the period 2018 to 2021.

Tourism

An additional €32.6 m was secured for tourism product development for the period 2018-2021 following the Mid-Term Review of the Capital Plan while a public consultation period on the development of a new National Greenways Strategy was also completed during the year.

Sports

Grants of €60 m were announced to a record 1,800 projects under the 2017 round of the Sports Capital Programme. Under the NDP, over €100 million in capital funding has been allocated for the SCP for the period to 2021. Construction on Phase 2 of the National Indoor Arena commenced in July.

The above is just a brief overview of activity in 2017 with a comprehensive overview available to the Deputy in the Annual Report when it is published.

Dublin Airport Authority

1065. Deputy Niamh Smyth asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if a product (details supplied) will be reviewed; if the DAA will introduce it to Dublin Airport to assist persons with disabilities; if he will contact the DAA on behalf of a person; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24586/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As the deputy is aware, daa holds statutory responsibility for the management, operation and development of Dublin Airport.

The matter raised by the Deputy in relation to the use of a specific piece of equipment at Dublin Airport is an operational matter for the airport itself.

I understand that daa has previously been contacted on this matter and I can confirm that remains the most appropriate channel through which to address queries regarding the use of specific equipment. daa is obligated to ensure that it complies with the Code or Practice for the Governance of State Bodies in relation to the procurement of any equipment or services.

daa are also required to meet their obligations under EC Regulation 1007/2007 concern-

ing the rights of disabled persons and persons with reduced mobility when travelling by air. Responsibility for the oversight of compliance with this regulation at Irish airports rests with the Commission for Aviation Regulation. I understand that the Commission provide for a complaint procedure if a passenger feels their rights have not been respected by the airport or air carrier. Further, the Commission may issue general directions to airports and airlines in relation to compliance with the regulation.

Fáilte Ireland

1066. Deputy Robert Troy asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number required for a full complement of the board of Fáilte Ireland; the number required for a quorum; the number of vacancies as at 1 June 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24629/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Under the National Tourism Development Act 2003, the Board of Fáilte Ireland shall consist of a Chairperson and twelve ordinary members, who are appointed by the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport.

The quorum is five for a meeting of the Authority, unless otherwise directed by the Minister.

As of the 1st June, there are seven vacancies on the Board of Fáilte Ireland. Following an advertising campaign run by the Public Appointment Service, a short-list of suitable candidates for consideration has recently been submitted by the Public Appointments Service to the Department and I expect to be in a position to fill the seven vacancies in the very near future.

Road Projects

1067. Deputy Tom Neville asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will address a matter (details supplied) regarding a bridge. [24634/18]

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 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.

Traffic Calming Measures

1068. Deputy Tom Neville asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if TII will confirm when a decision will issue on the latest developments on traffic calming proposals for Kilcornan, County Limerick, in view of the fact that Limerick City and County Council has stated it has submitted all the latest details. [24653/18]

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 na-

tional 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.

Public Services Card

1069. Deputy Mick Wallace asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the reason for the change to the mandatory requirement for a public services card for applying for a driver licence and provisional licence; the cost of the project to make the public services card mandatory for applications; when similar changes for the driver theory test will be implemented; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24664/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): It is Government policy to integrate the Public Services Card (PSC) into applications across the range of Government services. Use of a single form of ID will reduce the burden on both individuals and the administration of the State.

The Public Services Card (PSC) became an optional form of proof of ID for the National Driver Licensing Service (NDLS) from 9 April 2018. The possibility of the PSC being made mandatory for driving licence/learner permit applications was considered. However, in line with Government Policy as set out in the eGovernment Strategy 2017 - 2020, while encouraging the use of the PSC, I made clear that it would be necessary to have an alternative to the PSC. The option of using the new NDLS on-line system is being introduced from 5 June, with the alternative of visiting a front office for the purposes of applying for a licence/permit, using the supporting documentation as previously set out in Regulations, remaining in place.

The total cost to the Road Safety Authority (RSA) of the IT element of the project was some €2 million, along with advertising costs in the range of €30,000 to €40,000. While the card is not being made mandatory, I do not regard the advertising costs as wasted, since it did raise awareness of the PSC, the availability of an on-line option for driving licence applications and encourage the use of both.

At present, to undertake the Driver Theory Test, a PSC is being called for. However, in the interests of consistency, options to the PSC will be catered for. As the Driver Theory Test is operated under contract to the RSA by a private company, I gather that allowing for use of a passport, for example, may involve revisions to that contract. That is however an operational matter for the RSA.

Sports Capital Programme Eligibility

1070. Deputy Noel Rock asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if consideration has been given under the Sports Capital Programme to allow for flexibility for a sports club which operates on State-owned land which the club itself does not own (details supplied) and has been consistently rejected due to the ineligibility even though the land is ultimately State-owned. [24685/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin): 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.

Even if a club does not own land, it is possible to receive funding under the SCP. Clubs which do not own land can still apply for funding towards sports equipment. Furthermore, if a club does not own land but has a registered lease in place with at least 15 years remaining at application stage, the club can apply for any works that comply with the general terms and conditions of the SCP. I understand the club referred to has previously been allocated grants of over €920,000 under the SCP and this amount has been fully paid.

In relation to future rounds of the SCP, formal sanction was received last week from the Minister from Public Expenditure and Reform to open a new 2018 round of the programme. Accordingly, I expect to make an announcement in relation to the timing of the next round in the coming weeks.

In relation to the club referred to by the Deputy and any issues precluding them from submitting a valid application, I have asked my officials to engage with them, their landlord and the Office of the Chief State Solicitor as necessary to ensure a solution is found to allow them to apply for SCP funding in the future.

Sports Capital Programme

1071. **Deputy Noel Rock** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if consideration has been given to a multi-annual programme of sports capital grants (details supplied). [24687/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin): 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 Programme operated on an annual basis up to and including 2008. There were also Programmes in 2012, 2014, 2015 and 2017.

The recently published National Development Plan reaffirms the Government's commitment to sport infrastructure in the years ahead. At least €100 m in capital funding will be provided for the SCP for the coming four years. This will cover all of our existing commitments and also allow new rounds of the programme to open for applications. Formal sanction for the first new round of the programme has now been received from the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform and I expect to make an announcement in relation to a new 2018 round of the programme in the coming weeks. Further rounds of the SCP will be open in subsequent years. It will be open to any organisation with a suitable project to apply for funding under this round of the programme and all organisations that are registered on the Department's online application system will be informed of the new round when it is open for applications.

With regard to how applicants plan their projects, many organisations complete their projects in phases using grants from several rounds of the SCP. While grantees are normally given a two year timeframe to begin the draw down of their grants, the Department would extend this period where a grantee has made significant progress with their project.

Finally, the upcoming National Sports Policy, which will be considered by Government in the coming weeks, and published shortly thereafter, will include a specific focus on how Government should fund sports facilities, including through the SCP, in the years ahead.

Questions - Written Answers
Sports Capital Programme Data

1072. **Deputy Noel Rock** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the amount awarded across the past four rounds of the sports capital grant; the number of grants awarded; the number of grants drawn down; and the amount drawn down. [24688/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin): Details of all allocations and payments to all clubs and organisations under the Sports Capital Programme (SCP) since 1998 are published on the Department's website <http://www.dttas.ie/sport/english/sports-capital-programme>. Allocations under the most recent (2017) round of the programme were made at the end of last year. The summary information sought by the Deputy in relation to the last four rounds (2012, 2014, 2015 & 2017) of the SCP is set out in the following table.

2012 - 2017 Sports Capital Programmes	
Total amount allocated	€174.8m
Total amount paid	€90.1m
Total number of allocations	4,256
Number of grants fully drawn down	1,439
Number of grants fully outstanding	2,073
Number of grants partially drawn down	734
Number of grants withdrawn/partially withdrawn	10

Transport Policy

1073. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to consult with a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24712/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As the Deputy is aware, my Department has been considering a range of options for regulating rickshaws. Options considered include introducing a framework to regulate rickshaws up to introducing a prohibition. Consideration is from the perspectives of proportionality, public safety and enforcement as well as regarding the question of costs and benefits.

While this examination is now at an advanced stage, I would welcome the input of the person referred to by the Deputy, and my Department will be in touch to arrange a meeting with him very shortly.

Tourism Funding

1074. **Deputy Pat Casey** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the funding streams available for those wishing to enter the tourism accommodation sector, namely campsites, self-catering and bed and breakfasts in view of the lack of bed capacity in many counties such as County Wicklow; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24718/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): My Department's role in relation to tourism lies in the area of national tourism policy development. While the Department provides funding to Fáilte Ireland to invest in tourism, it does not have a role in the

administration of Fáilte Ireland's grant programmes. Similarly, the Department does not have discretionary funds at its disposal to assist with individual tourism proposals.

Accordingly, I have asked Fáilte Ireland to provide information in relation to capacity in Wicklow as well as what business supports are available to the tourism accommodation sector directly to the Deputy. Please contact my private office if you do not hear within ten working days.

Driver Licences

1075. Deputy Danny Healy-Rae asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if the NDLS is allowed to reissue a driver licence to the address that is on file for that person in the case of a driver licence that is still in date but has been lost; if the case of a person (details supplied) will be addressed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24771/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Where a person is temporarily abroad, they may renew their licence/replace a lost or stolen licence without appearing in person at a centre of the National Driver Licensing Service. This has been the case since 2014.

Cycling Facilities Provision

1076. Deputy Eamon Scanlon asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if the Collooney to Dromahair greenway is included in the national greenways plan for 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24794/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The Greenways Strategy will provide a framework for the development of Ireland's greenways and will determine the type of project to be funded by my Department over the coming decade. This is a long term Strategy with the aim of increasing the number, length and regional spread of greenways across the country. It will set out guidance to project promoters on matters including strategic nature, length, design standards, accommodation works and early consultation with communities and land owners along proposed routes.

My officials are currently finalising the Strategy which I expect to be in a position to publish in the coming month. The greenways to be funded under the Strategy will be determined after a call for applications later in 2018 with a view to awarding funding to a number of projects for drawdown between 2019 to 2021. In this regard, I was pleased to secure additional funding for greenways last year bringing the total available for the period 2018 to 2021 to €55.9 m.

Given the increased interest in greenways in recent years I expect that there will be a strong response to this funding call. I would urge potential applicants for funding to progress their planning and design of greenways as far as possible in advance of any application for funding and to resolve any land ownership issues.

Road Projects Status

1077. Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when a reply will issue to representations (details supplied) to Transport Infrastructure Ireland in respect of funding; the reason for the delay in issuing a response to the query; and if he will make

a statement on the matter. [24805/18]

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 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.

National Sports Policy Framework

1078. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when he expects to publish the promised review of the national sports policy; his plans to reintroduce the local authority swimming pool programme as part of the review; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24825/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I am pleased to confirm that, following a substantial consultation and drafting process, the new National Sports Policy will be considered by Government in the coming weeks and will, I anticipate, be published in July.

As previously advised to the House, the Local Authority Swimming Pool Programme (LASPP) provides grant aid to local authorities towards the capital costs of new swimming pools or the refurbishment of existing pools. There are four swimming pool projects in the current LASPP and the priority in 2018 is on progressing these projects.

In relation to the future funding of swimming pools, the position remains that the upcoming National Sports Policy will include a specific focus on how Government should fund sports facilities, including swimming pools, in the years ahead.

Road Projects Status

1079. **Deputy Paul Murphy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the reason the proposed upgrade of the N81 from Hollywood Cross to Tallaght, bypassing Blessington, has been suspended; his plans to improve the road in view of the large number of fatalities on the road; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24848/18]

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 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 Policy

1080. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to deal with the use of rickshaws; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24853/18]

1081. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to introduce a ban on the use of rickshaws; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24886/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1080 and 1081 together.

As the Deputy may be aware, my Department has been considering a range of options for regulating rickshaws from the perspectives of proportionality, public safety and enforcement as well as regarding the question of costs and benefits. Options considered include introducing a framework to regulate rickshaws up to introducing a full prohibition.

As I indicated recently when I attended a meeting of the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Transport, Tourism and Sport at which the matter of rickshaws was considered, this examination by my Department is at an advanced stage and legal advice has been sought from the Office of Attorney General on the preferred approach. Once consultations with this Office are complete, I expect to be in a position to finalise and announce my decision before the end of this Dáil term, with any corresponding legislative provisions to be developed quickly thereafter.

Public Transport

1082. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the timeframe for the retrofitting of both audio and visual equipment to the Bus Éireann fleet in counties Sligo and Leitrim to assist persons who are deaf and visually impaired to travel independently; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24925/18]

1083. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of wheelchair-accessible buses available on routes licensed by the National Transport Authority serving counties Sligo and Leitrim; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24926/18]

1084. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when the National Transport Authority will have its bus stop accessibility audit completed for counties Sligo and Leitrim; if it will be publicly available; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24927/18]

1085. **Deputy Marc MacSharry** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he has had an engagement with the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government with regard to the provision of additional funding to enable local authorities to provide wheelchair-accessible bus stops nationally; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24928/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1082 to 1085, inclusive, together.

As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport I have responsibility for policy and overall funding in relation to public transport. My Department's high level policy goal for accessible public transport is embodied in the concept of 'Transport Access for All'. This policy is based on the provisions of the Disability Act 2005 and related Government strategies, in particular the

National Disability Inclusion Strategy 2017-2021.

In Budget 2018 I secured a trebling of the funding provided for the accessibility retro-fit programme as part of the 4 year capital envelope for public transport announced. An amount of almost €28 million is being made available for accessibility upgrades for existing older infrastructure in the period 2018 to 2021. The additional funding will facilitate the continued roll-out of the programmes to install accessible bus stops, upgrade train stations to make them accessible to wheelchair users and provide grant support for the introduction of more wheelchair accessible vehicles into the taxi fleet. Under the National Development Plan 2018-2027 there will be continued investment in the retro-fit programme which is managed by the National Transport Authority (NTA).

Under the Dublin Transport Authority Act 2008 the NTA has functional responsibility for promoting the development of an integrated, accessible public transport network. This includes the provision of wheelchair accessible bus stops in rural and regional areas under the retro-fit programme and any issues in relation to audio and visual communications on the Bus Éireann fleet. In addition, as the licensing authority for public bus passenger services, the NTA will be in a position to answer the Deputy's query regarding licences issued by it to the bus and coach industry.

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.

Tourism Policy

1086. Deputy Marc MacSharry asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if either his Department or Fáilte Ireland has ever attempted to quantify the value of the accessible tourism market; if not, if he will request that one be undertaken; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24929/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin): My Department is primarily involved in the development of national tourism policy, while the tourism agencies have responsibility for the implementation of this policy.

Fáilte Ireland has included Accessible Tourism in their strategic and operational plans. From 2019 onwards they plan to include questions on their domestic and overseas visitor surveys to estimate the size and value of the accessible tourism market to Ireland.

I have referred the Deputy's question to Fáilte Ireland for further information on their Accessible Tourism strategies. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within ten working days.

Tourism Promotion

1087. Deputy Marc MacSharry asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if either his Department or Fáilte Ireland has ever investigated the delivery of an accessible tourism marketing campaign; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24930/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): My role, as Minister with responsibility for tourism, is to develop national tourism policy which is then implemented by the tourism agencies - Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland. Fáilte Ireland is responsible for

the development of the Irish tourism industry and Tourism Ireland has responsibility for the overseas promotion of the island of Ireland as a tourism destination.

The delivery of accessible tourism marketing campaigns, domestically and internationally, are matters for Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland respectively. Accordingly, I have referred the question to both agencies for direct reply. Please contact my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

Irish Airlines Superannuation Scheme

1088. Deputy Darragh O'Brien asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if his attention has been drawn to the substantial cuts imposed on members of a pension scheme (details supplied) in advance of the sale of the State's stake in Aer Lingus; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24942/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The Irish Airlines (General Employees) Superannuation Scheme (IASS) is currently the subject of on-going legal proceedings by retired members of daa, Shannon Airport Authority, Aer Lingus and the former SR Technics. Those proceedings began in July 2015.

As this matter is *sub judice* I am unable to comment any further on the issue.

Local Improvement Scheme Funding

1089. Deputy Eamon Scanlon asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if a once-off allocation of funding will be made to clear the backlog of local improvement schemes in County Leitrim; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25068/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The regional and local road grant allocations for 2018 were announced at the end of January and do not make provision for Local Improvement Schemes (LIS). This approach was taken in light of the fact that the Minister for Rural and Community Development announced that he would be providing significant funding for LIS this year and I was conscious of the continuing pressing need to direct resources into maintaining and renewing roads which have been taken in charge.

I am also conscious that the LIS is complemented by other streams of funding within the ambit of the Department of Rural and Community Development including CLÁR funding for small scale capital projects in rural areas - including private roads - that have experienced significant levels of depopulation.

In light of the above the Deputy may wish to contact the Minister for Rural and Community Development in this regard.

I have however recently announced funding of €23m for Community Involvement Schemes, of which, Leitrim County Council are receiving almost €1.2m for improvements to local roads. All available grant funding has been allocated by my Department.

Greenways Development

1090. Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when he

plans to publish the greenways strategy; the reason for the delay in publishing same in view of the reply to Parliamentary Question No. 1382 of 16 January 2018, that he hoped to publish the strategy in the first quarter of 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25075/18]

1091. Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when further funding will be provided for the part of the Connemara greenway from Oughterard to Clifden (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25076/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1090 and 1091 together.

The Greenways Strategy will provide a framework for the development of Ireland's greenways and will determine the type of project to be funded by my Department over the coming decade. This is a long term Strategy with the aim of increasing the number, length and regional spread of greenways across the country. It will set out guidance to project promoters on matters including strategic nature, length, design standards, accommodation works and early consultation with communities and land owners along proposed routes.

It is important that the National Strategy for the future development of Greenways would be subject to indepth consultation with relevant stakeholders. That consultation has now been completed and my officials are currently finalising the Strategy. I expect to publish the Strategy in the coming month. This will be followed by call for applications later in 2018 with a view to awarding funding to a number of projects for drawdown between 2019 to 2021. In this regard, I was pleased to secure additional funding for greenways last year bringing the total available for the period 2018 to 2021 to €55.9m.

Given the increased interest in greenways in recent years I expect that there will be a strong response to this funding call. I would urge potential applicants for funding to progress their planning and design of greenways as far as possible in advance of any application for funding and to resolve any land ownership issues.

With regard to further funding for the Connemara Greenway, it will be a matter for Galway County Council in the first instance to submit a proposal to my Department, which meets the required criteria, under the upcoming funding call.

Question No. 1091 answered with Question No. 1090.

Airport Development Projects

1092. Deputy Clare Daly asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport further to Parliamentary Question No. 204 of 30 May 2018, if his attention has been drawn to the fact that although the proposed third runway at Dublin Airport has been designed to accommodate code F aircraft, the proposed third runway, as currently designed, will prohibit most current and future wide body aircraft from exploiting their maximum range and weight capability (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25084/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As the deputy is aware, daa holds statutory responsibility for the management, operation and development of Dublin Airport, including the delivery of the North Runway project.

As previously stated, I have been informed that daa is satisfied that the new runway will facilitate any modern long range aircraft expected to operate from Dublin Airport.

Specifically, I understand that daa has considered the future aircraft fleet mix that may operate from Dublin Airport in concluding an appropriate length for the North Runway; the new runway will be 3,110m in length, and the existing main runway is 2,637m. A key component in arriving at appropriate runway length is to consider the Maximum Take Off Weight (MTOW) of the aircraft fleet which may operate from the airport. Once a runway can accommodate the MTOW of an aircraft, a longer runway will not facilitate a greater range; this is down to the aircraft itself.

In the case of the A330, studies show that North runway at Dublin Airport could accommodate an A330-200 at its Maximum Take Off Weight of 238 tonnes. It is a matter for airlines how they wish to distribute this weight between passengers, cargo and fuel in order to determine how far the aircraft might fly.

Proposed Legislation

1093. **Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of proposed legislation to deal with issues concerning scramblers and quad bikes in Dublin. [25110/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): My role in relation to the regulation of scrambler bikes, quad bikes and other similar small vehicles falls under Road Traffic legislation, and relates solely to their use in a public place. It does not extend to private properties, or to public parks which are under the jurisdiction of local authorities.

For the purposes of the Road Traffic Acts, a “public place” means any public road, and any street, road or other place to which the public have access with vehicles whether as of right or by permission and whether subject to or free of charge.

Scramblers, quad bikes and similar vehicles are mechanically propelled vehicles, which means that they are vehicles intended or adapted for propulsion by mechanical power. As such, under Road Traffic legislation, the user of a vehicle in a public place must have insurance, road tax and a driving licence, and must also wear a helmet, with severe penalties (including fixed charge notices, penalty points, fines and possible seizure of the vehicle) for not being in compliance with these requirements.

Scramblers and quads are also subject to the requirements of the Road Traffic (Construction, Equipment and Use of Vehicles) Regulations 1963 to 2002, and the Road Traffic (Lighting of Vehicles) Regulations 1963 to 1996. These regulations prescribe standards in relation to essential matters such as brakes, steering, mirrors, safety glass, wipers, headlamps, rear lighting, indicators and reflectors.

Although my Department has attended the recent working group convened by the Department of Justice and Equality, there are no indications that any changes will be required to what is already a comprehensive suite of road traffic legislation. Enforcement of this legislation is entirely a matter for an Garda Síochána.

The use of such vehicles in parks is outside the remit of this Department; it is a matter for the local authorities to introduce bye-laws prohibiting their use in areas under their control, while the framework legislation for such bye-laws is a matter for the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government. In light of the very serious incident which occurred last week, regarding the use of a scrambler in such places, it is hoped this matter will be given urgent attention by all parties.

Questions - Written Answers
Commencement of Legislation

1094. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the sections and parts of all legislation brought forward by his Department in each of the past four years that have yet to be commenced; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25186/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The current sections and parts of any primary legislation brought forward by my Department in the last four years that are yet to be commenced are outlined in the following table below with an explanation provided in each different case.

Year	Legislation Title	Sections not Commenced	Reasons why Sections not commenced
2012	RSA Commercial Vehicle Roadworthiness Act	Section 43	Requires Regulation
	RSA Commercial Vehicle Roadworthiness Act	Section 45	The Commencement of Section 36 alongside the introduction of the new Commercial Vehicle Roadworthiness (Roadside Enforcement) Regulations removes the need to commence this section as they deal with the same issue
2014	Merchant Shipping (Registration of Ships) Act 2014	Whole Act other than section 69	Full commencement of the Act requires the establishment of a new electronic Irish Register of Ships and ship registration regime, which will be progressed under a separate IT project. New ship registration regulations are also required to complement the IT project.
2014	Road Traffic Act	Section 6	Needs regulations
2016	Road Traffic Act	Section 30	Section 30 – Amended in Road Traffic Bill 2017
	Road Traffic Act	Section 31	Section 31 – Currently under consideration
	Road Traffic Act	Sections 34 & 35	Sections 34 and 35 – Currently under consideration
	Road Traffic Act	Sections 38	currently under consideration
	Road Traffic Act	Section 39	Amended in Road traffic Bill 2017

Rail Services

1095. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of bicycles Iarnród Éireann trains can carry per journey on each of its routes in tabular form. [25198/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The issue raised is a matter for Iarnród Éireann and I have forwarded the Deputy's question to the company for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a response within ten working days.

Motor Tax Exemptions

1096. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the reason the case of a person (details supplied) who applied to have their car certified as not in use from July 2015 has now received a car tax bill of €1,892; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that this person had sent in an RF150 form to state their car was off the road; if this person is only due to pay tax from the present as they get their car back on the road; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25199/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The Non-Use of Motor Vehicles Act 2013 provides that a vehicle may be declared off the road, in advance, for a period of between 3 and 12 calendar months, thus avoiding liability for motor tax. If, thereafter, the vehicle is not going to be used for a further time, another declaration may be made during the last month of the period covered by the first declaration. I would stress that such declarations must be made ahead of the period for which the vehicle will be off the road.

If a declaration of non-use is not made in respect of a vehicle, arrears are payable, at the time of next taxation, in respect of each month not covered by a declaration.

Sports Capital Programme

1097. **Deputy Pat Casey** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when a new round of sports capital grants will be undertaken; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25223/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin): The 2017 round of the Sports Capital Programme attracted a record 2,320 applications. In November and December last, Minister Ross and I announced €60m in allocations to a record 1,800 projects under the 2017 round. A review of the 2017 round of the programme has now been finalised and published on my Department's website (www.dttas.ie). This review highlights aspects of the 2017 round of the SCP that worked well but also suggests some further improvements which are being considered prior to the next round of the programme opening for applications. Some of these changes require amendments to the Department's online application system and work in this regard has now commenced. Formal sanction was received last week from the Minister from Public Expenditure and Reform to open the new round of the programme. Accordingly, I expect to make an announcement in relation to the timing of the next round in the coming weeks.

Transport Policy

1098. Deputy Joe Carey asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the progress to date in the implementation of the transport access for all policy in terms of the taxi fleet, buses and trains; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25329/18]

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. My Department's high level policy goal for accessible public transport is embodied in the concept of 'Transport Access for All'. This policy is based on the provisions of the Disability Act 2005 and related Government strategies, in particular the National Disability Inclusion Strategy 2017-2021.

Accessibility features, such as wheelchair access and audio/visual aids, are built into all new public transport infrastructure projects and vehicles from the design stage. Newer systems such as LUAS are fully accessible.

My Department funds an ongoing programme of accessibility improvement grants to upgrade older existing infrastructure and facilities which is managed by the National Transport Authority (NTA). In Budget 2018 I secured a trebling of the funding provided for the accessibility retro-fit programme as part of the 4 year capital envelope for public transport announced. An amount of almost €28 million is being made available for accessibility upgrades in the period 2018 to 2021. The additional funding will facilitate the continued roll-out of the programmes to install accessible bus stops, upgrade train stations to make them accessible to wheelchair users and provide grant support for the introduction of more wheelchair accessible vehicles into the taxi fleet.

I intend to improve upon that under the National Development Plan (NDP) over the next ten years and beyond. Investment in public transport will be accelerated under the NDP to support the development of an integrated, accessible and sustainable national public transport system. A number of key new major public transport programmes are proposed to be delivered under the NDP over the period to 2027 and these will be fully accessible as part of the normal design. In addition, there will be continued investment in the retro-fit programme under the NDP.

Since becoming a Minister, I have been particularly struck by the personal experiences related to me in my meetings with people with disabilities who use public transport. As a result of wide consultation with members of the disability community and with disability bodies striving to make an impact, I decided that the public transport companies under my aegis should each have at least one board member who has personal knowledge and experience of the needs and difficulties of people with disabilities using public transport.

The competition for the appointments to the Boards of the NTA, Dublin Bus, Bus Éireann and Irish Rail, is being run by the Public Appointments Service (PAS) and the closing date for applications was 27 April last. I expect to be in a position to appoint persons to the Boards in the coming weeks.

It is also my intention that a similar appointment should be made to the Board of CIÉ. As well as the public transport companies, I will be appointing a disability advocate to the Board of Sport Ireland and this process is also underway by PAS.

Under the Dublin Transport Authority Act 2008 the NTA has functional responsibility for promoting the development of an integrated, accessible public transport network, as well as having responsibility for the management of the accessibility retro-fit programme.

In light of the NTA's responsibilities in this matter, I have forwarded your question to the NTA for further response to you. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a response within 10 working days.

Dublin Bus Services

1099. Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when he envisages the introduction of 24-hour services by Dublin Bus; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25339/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The issue raised is a matter for the National Transport Authority (NTA) in conjunction with Dublin Bus 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.

Sports Capital Programme

1100. Deputy Brendan Smith asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when he plans to announce details of the next sports capital programme scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25345/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin): The 2017 round of the Sports Capital Programme attracted a record 2,320 applications. In November and December last, Minister Ross and I announced €60m in allocations to a record 1,800 projects under the 2017 round. A review of the 2017 round of the programme has now been finalised and published on my Department's website (www.dttas.ie). This review highlights aspects of the 2017 round of the SCP that worked well but also suggests some further improvements which are being considered prior to the next round of the programme opening for applications. Some of these changes require amendments to the Department's online application system and work in this regard has now commenced. Formal sanction was received last week from the Minister from Public Expenditure and Reform to open the new round of the programme. Accordingly, I expect to make an announcement in relation to the timing of the next round in the coming weeks. All clubs and organisations registered on the Department's online application system will be notified at that time.

Stadium Projects

1101. Deputy Noel Rock asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of the development of Dalymount Park as part of the Euro 2020 legacy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25370/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The proposed redevelopment of Dalymount Park is a matter, in the first instance, for Dublin City Council. A grant of €65,000 was allocated to the Council for the project under the 2017 Sports Capital Programme. In terms of future Government funding for the development, the recently published National Development Plan (NDP) contains a commitment to establish a new "Large Scale Sport Infrastructure Fund" (LSSIF) with at least €100m available over the coming years. It is intended that the Fund will be for larger projects where the proposed Government contribution exceeds the amount currently available for individual projects under the Sports Capital Programme and all

projects will need to be fully compliant with the Public Spending Code and EU State Aid regulations. My officials hope to have the draft terms and conditions of the new scheme finalised shortly and an announcement in relation to when applications will be accepted will be made once this work is complete. At this stage, it is envisaged that the fund will be initially focused on the National Governing Bodies of Sport and Local Authorities. Accordingly, it will be open to Dublin City Council to apply for funding under the programme once applications are invited later this year.

Sports Events

1102. Deputy Noel Rock asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of Dublin hosting a round of the FIA Formula E championship; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25371/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin): The hosting of major sports events, both participative and spectator sports, can provide a great showcase for Ireland and drive international visitor numbers. In addition, the media coverage of sports events helps to put Ireland onto travel itineraries as a holiday destination.

I am very supportive of the ongoing efforts of the tourism agencies and the national governing bodies of sport to attract international events. Any proposal to support the hosting of an event must be subject to an assessment of the costs/benefits involved in any State financial support, in particular the number of overseas visitors. In regard to the event mentioned by the Deputy, I am not aware of any contact between the event promoter and Fáilte Ireland or any assessment having been made, but I have asked Fáilte Ireland to reply directly to the Deputy in this regard. Please contact my private office if you have not received a reply within ten working days.

Sports Events

1103. Deputy Noel Rock asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to consider hosting the ConIFA World Football Cup; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25372/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin): The hosting of major sports events, both participative and spectator sports, can provide a great showcase for Ireland and drive international visitor numbers. In addition, the media coverage of sports events helps to put Ireland onto travel itineraries as a holiday destination.

I am very supportive of the ongoing efforts of the tourism agencies and the national governing bodies of sport to attract international events. Any proposal to host an event must be subject to an assessment of the costs/benefits involved in any State financial support, in particular the number of overseas visitors. In regard to the event mentioned by the Deputy, I am not aware of any contact between the event promoter and Fáilte Ireland or any assessment having being made, but I have asked Fáilte Ireland to reply directly to the Deputy in this regard. Please contact my private office if you have not received a reply within ten working days.

1104. Deputy Noel Rock asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the measures in place to develop female participation in sport; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25373/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Sport Ireland, which is funded by my Department, is the statutory body with responsibility for the promotion, development and co-ordination of sport. This includes responsibility for the development of strategies for increasing participation in sport.

I have referred the Deputy's question to Sport Ireland for direct reply. I would ask the Deputy to inform my office if a reply is not received within 10 days.

My Department's new National Sports Policy, which will be published shortly, aims at increasing the levels of participation in sport and physical activity across the population over the next ten years, with a specific focus on less active groups including women and girls.

Sport and Recreational Development

1105. Deputy Noel Rock asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the measures in place to support the development of grassroots football across the State; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25374/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Sport Ireland, which is funded by my Department, is the statutory body with responsibility for the development of sport, increasing participation at all levels and raising standards. This includes responsibility for the allocation of funding across its various programmes, such as the Field Sports scheme of grant funding to the three major field sports (FAI, GAA, IRFU) in respect of their work to encourage greater underage participation.

I have referred the Deputy's Question to Sport Ireland for direct reply in relation to the development of grassroots football across the State. I would ask the Deputy to inform my office if a reply is not received within 10 days.

Road Improvement Schemes

1106. Deputy Brendan Smith asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if the necessary upgrading of an arterial route (details supplied) will be prioritised for funding in the 2019 road works programme in view of the importance of this route for a large part of the Border region; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25376/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Proposals to deliver an upgraded East-West route linking Dundalk to Sligo, taking in Cavan, involve linking elements of the national road network and regional roads along as direct a route as possible. Essentially the route involves upgrade/realignment works on the regional routes from Dundalk to Cavan and on national routes from Cavan to Sligo. As regards the regional road aspect of the proposal, the improvement and maintenance of regional and local roads in its area is a statutory function of local authorities in accordance with the provisions of Section 13 of the Roads Act, 1993. Works on such roads are a matter for the relevant local authority to be funded from its own resources supplemented by State road grants.

My Department provided funding to Cavan County Council (acting as lead authority with Monaghan and Louth County Councils) with over €2m in the period 2007-2014 to progress the regional road element of the project to preliminary design.

This year I have given an allocation of €25,000 to Cavan County Council to enable the Council to undertake a preliminary appraisal, in line with the current requirements in the Public Spending Code and the Capital Investment Framework, of the Cavan to Dundalk section of the route. The aim of this appraisal would be to assess the extent to which the scheme or elements of it can be justified in terms of appraisal and advanced for further consideration in relation to schemes for development post 2021.

Brexit Issues

1107. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the extent to which he anticipates bodies under the aegis of his Department to be affected by Brexit with particular reference to inward investments and future expansion affecting the tourism and transport sectors; the extent to which he continues to liaise with European institutions in this context; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24599/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The main impact of Brexit on the tourism and transport sectors is expected to be potential disruption to connectivity to our markets rather than on inward investment to these sectors. Ireland's maritime and aviation sectors are critical to trade and tourism and it is essential that any impacts on these sectors are minimised.

In relation to transport, the National Development Plan outlines a range of projects for investment in our roads network and sets out ambitious investment programmes in our main ports and airports that will enhance capacity and facilitate smoother connectivity to international markets.

In relation to tourism, Tourism Ireland has a programme of marketing activity in place for 2018 to keep Ireland front of mind for British visitors. That marketing effort will continue throughout the year. In addition, Tourism Ireland and Fáilte Ireland launched an initiative specially designed to boost tourist numbers from Britain to the Wild Atlantic Way. A €1.35 million marketing campaign in Britain will be complemented by a Fáilte Ireland €500,000 programme to support businesses along the Wild Atlantic Way to position themselves to benefit from the campaign, as well as to boost its own marketing campaigns in Northern Ireland.

Trips to Ireland for the first four months of 2018 were up 7.3 % compared to the corresponding period of 2017, including an increase of 1.1% from residents of Great Britain.

In Budget 2018, with Brexit in mind, €2m in capital funding was specifically secured for Tourism Ireland to invest in strengthening its digital infrastructure, deepening its understanding of the all-important overseas consumer and developing new creative content, for roll out from 2019.

Brexit and its potential implications for Ireland continue to be managed on a whole-of-government basis. This includes the transport and tourism sectors, and my Department is continuing to work to address the potential impacts of Brexit on these sectors, including in relation to bodies under the aegis of the Department.

Road Network

1108. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the degree to which he has examined existing road networks throughout the country in both urban and rural areas with a view to the identification of apparent difficulties in respect of capacity and the need to ensure the completion of the national arterial road network thus providing for modern and efficient transport to and from the regions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24600/18]

1126. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the extent to which his Department and Transport Infrastructure Ireland continue to examine the locations at which numerous accidents have taken place on minor or major roads including motorways throughout the country with particular reference to the frequency of such accidents with a view to identifying the cause or causes and addressing the issues by way of remedial action as soon as possible; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25679/18]

1127. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the projected timeframe for the provision of vital major road networks throughout the country both in the commuter belt or elsewhere with a view to maximising access, reduction of delays and alleviation of traffic bottlenecks; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25680/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1108, 1126 and 1127 together.

As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy and the provision of funding in relation to the national roads programme. The planning, design and implementation of individual national road projects is primarily a matter for the Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) under the Roads Acts 1993-2015 in conjunction with the local authorities concerned.

Under the Roads Act 1993 as amended, TII are responsible for the provision of a safe and efficient network of national roads. TII assess the current condition and performance of the national road network on an annual basis considering aspects such as capacity, traffic volumes, level of service, pavement condition, condition of structures and safety. In this context TII continues to map and collate collision data for national roads with a view to informing decisions on safety interventions on the network.

Since 2012 a summary of performance indicators for the national road network is published annually by TII in the National Roads Network Indicators which are available on the TII website www.tii.ie.

The recently published National Development Plan (NDP), which has been developed by Government to underpin the successful implementation of the new National Planning Framework, provides the strategic and financial framework for TII's national roads programme for the period from 2018 to 2027. The focus of TII's activities over the coming years is accordingly being directed towards the development of the major national road improvement schemes that are included in the NDP.

As regards regional and local roads, the improvement and maintenance of these roads is the statutory responsibility of local authorities, in accordance with the provisions of Section 13 of the Roads Act 1993. Works on those roads are funded from the Council's own resources supplemented by State road grants.

It also the role of local authorities as road authorities to examine and monitor road networks

within their county boundaries. The initial selection and prioritisation of works to be funded is also a matter for the local authority.

For completeness, I have referred the Deputy's question to TII for direct reply in respect of national road matters. I ask that he advise my private office if he does not receive a reply within 10 working days.

Employment Rights

1109. Deputy Mick Barry asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if his attention has been drawn to the fact that the Workplace Relations Commission at hearings held on the 29 May 2017 and 17 June 2017 concerning working conditions on the merchant marine fleet and fishing fleet, respectively that an adjudicator ruled that vessel owners were not required to provide medical cover for crew; and if legislation can be brought forward to make medical cover obligatory. [25429/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The adjudications referred to in the question have not been brought to my attention.

Currently the living and working conditions of seafarers and fishers are governed by both EU Directives and International Labour Organisation Conventions, namely the Maritime Labour Convention (MLC), 2006 and the Work in Fishing Convention, 2007.

The Conventions cover a range of issues including requirements that a shipowner or fishing vessel owner has a duty to make provision for seafarers' or fishers' medical care and other expenses in certain circumstances.

The MLC, 2006 was implemented in 2014 by a package of Regulations and the Work in Fishing Convention is currently being progressed by my Department.

Taxi Regulations

1110. Deputy John Lahart asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the measures being taken to reduce the numbers of unlicensed taxi drivers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25460/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The regulation of the small public service vehicle (SPSV) industry, including enforcement, is a matter for the National Transport Authority (NTA) under the provisions of the Taxi Regulation Act 2013. The NTA carries out enforcement activities nationally in conjunction with An Garda Síochána, whose members are also authorised persons for the purposes of the 2013 Act.

Accordingly, I have referred the Deputy's question to the NTA for direct reply to you. I ask that he advise my private office if he does not receive a response within 10 working days.

Roads Maintenance

1111. Deputy Michael Healy-Rae asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will address a matter (details supplied) regarding funding; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25534/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The improvement and maintenance of regional and local roads is the statutory responsibility of local authorities, in accordance with the provisions of Section 13 of the Roads Act 1993. Works on those roads are funded from the Council's own resources supplemented by State road grants. The initial selection and prioritisation of works to be funded is also a matter for the local authority.

Within the budget available to the Department, grant funding is allocated on as fair and equitable basis as possible. In this context, grants in the main grant categories, including restoration maintenance, are allocated based on the length of regional and local roads within a local authority area of responsibility and it is envisaged that grants will continue to be made available on that basis. My Department allocates funding at local authority level and allocations to individual Municipal Districts are a matter for the Council.

I announced the 2018 regional and local road allocations on 29th January and all grant funding available to my Department has now been allocated. It is a matter for each Council to determine its priorities and decide its work programme taking available grant funding and its own resources into account. I always stress to Councils the importance of prioritising roads when allocating their own resources.

Departmental Properties

1112. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will address a matter (details supplied) regarding the leasing of property; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25545/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The Irish Coast Guard, a Division of my Department, in consultation with the Chief State Solicitor's Office is reviewing the draft lease. A decision on this matter will be made in due course.

Departmental Funding

1113. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his Department's capital allocation in each of the years 2019 to 2023; and the areas to which funds will be allocated in each of those years.; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25579/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The Capital Allocation for the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport for the years 2019 to 2022 can be found in the recently published National Development Plan 2018-2027 at <http://www.gov.ie/en/project-ireland-2040/>. We do not have a capital allocation yet for 2023.

Capital Allocation

2019	2020	2021	2022
€ million	€ million	€ million	€ million
1,643	2,058	2,526	2,405

In my Budget Speech 2018 I have listed the priorities within the Programmes within my Department and how the Capital allocations will be spent.

<http://www.dttas.ie/speeches/2017/minister-ross-budget-2018-speech>

Further details on my Department's Capital allocation can also be found in REV 2018 which was published in December 2017.

<http://www.per.gov.ie/en/revised-estimates-for-public-services-2018-published/>

Insurance Coverage

1114. Deputy Charlie McConalogue asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport further to Parliamentary Question No. 225 of 17 May 2018, if he will address the fact that some insurance companies are refusing to quote based on whether a person is VAT registered or not; his views on whether such a refusal is reasonable; his further views on whether this will have a negative impact of small sole traders; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25592/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As I said in my answer to previous Parliamentary Question No. 225 Reference 21794/18 on 17 May 2018, insurance companies are private companies. Neither my Department nor the Central Bank of Ireland has the power to direct insurance companies on the pricing of insurance products. The EU framework for insurance expressly prohibits Member States from adopting rules which require prior approval of the pricing or terms and conditions of insurance products. The provision of insurance cover and the price at which it is offered is a commercial matter for insurance companies and is based on an assessment of the risks they are willing to accept and adequate provisioning to meet those risks. These are considered by insurance companies on a case by case basis.

Insurance Ireland operates a free insurance information service for those who have queries, complaints or difficulties in relation to obtaining insurance. All calls regarding refusal to quote, or quotations that are so excessive as to be in effect a refusal, should be directed to Insurance Ireland by phone at (01) 676 1820, by email at declined@insuranceireland.eu or by post at 5 Harbourmaster Place, IFSC, Dublin 1 quoting the Declined Cases Agreement. The Declined Cases Agreement is administered by a committee made up of representatives of insurance companies and includes representatives from the Consumers Association of Ireland and the Financial Services Ombudsman. All motor insurance providers in Ireland must agree to abide the Declined Cases Agreement under the General Good Requirements for Insurance and Reinsurance Undertakings of the Central Bank of Ireland.

Sports Capital Programme Applications

1115. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the extent to which applications for capital grants that were unsuccessful in 2017 for various reasons will be examined with a view to possible accommodation in the future; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25668/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin): The 2017 round of the Sports Capital Programme attracted a record 2,320 applications. In November and December last, Minister Ross and I announced €60 million in allocations to a record 1,800 projects under the 2017 round. A review of the 2017 round of the programme has now been finalised and published on my Department's website (www.dttas.ie). This review highlights aspects of the 2017 round of the SCP that worked well but also suggests some further improvements which are being considered prior to the next round of the programme opening for applications. It is proposed that all applicants who were invalid, or partially invalid, under the 2017 round of the programme will be allowed to correct their applications for the 2018 round without the need to submit a completely new application.

Some of the other changes being introduced for the 2018 round require amendments to the Department's online application system and work in this regard has now commenced. Formal sanction was received last week from the Minister from Public Expenditure and Reform to open the new round of the programme. Accordingly, I expect to make an announcement in relation to the timing of the next round in the coming weeks. All clubs and organisations registered on the Department's online application system will be notified at that time.

Sports Capital Programme Administration

1116. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he and his Department continue to liaise with various sporting groups that have been the beneficiaries of sports capital grants in the past with a view to ensuring that all such grants are used effectively and efficiently and in circumstances in which difficulties have arisen, assistance of a constructive nature might be offered; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25669/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin): The Sports Capital Programme 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. As a matter of course, officials in the Sports Capital Programmes Division of my Department continually liaise with relevant clubs/organisations from the time of the provisional allocation to the final payment of the grant. In this regard, the officials are always available to discuss any issues that may arise with any sports organisation. Contact details for the relevant officials in the Sports Capital Division that deal with each county are available on www.sportscapitalprogramme.ie.

Rural Transport Services

1117. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the extent to which his Department has continued to evaluate rural transport requirements with a view to bringing transport to the population rather than forcing the population to converge on towns and villages as the population increases; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25670/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Responsibility for the provision of public transport services in rural areas, including the operation of the Rural Transport Programme, is a matter for the National Transport Authority (NTA) and I have forwarded the Deputy's question to the NTA for direct reply. I ask him to advise my private office if he does not receive a response within 10 working days.

Transport Infrastructure Provision

1118. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the extent to which his Department continues to evaluate the transport system, road and rail, public and private, to ensure the development of efficient and effective transport in all areas throughout the country; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25671/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): My Department continually monitors and evaluates the transport system. The National Transport Authority, in the case of Public Transport, and Transport Infrastructure Ireland, in the case of national roads,

collect and publish key performance indicators. These are used by the Department to inform policy and spending decisions. My Department produces an annual publication, "Transport Trends", which pulls together key data on the transport system from a variety of sources, and provides a very useful overview of the effectiveness and efficiency of the system.

Under the provisions of the Public Spending Code, all Exchequer spending proposals require a Business Case, which includes Financial and Economic Ex-Ante Evaluations, or Appraisals, of the proposal. The level of detail required is dependent on the level of expenditure required. This system ensures that any Exchequer funding on transport delivers value for money for the taxpayer. To assist in this process for the transport sector, my Department has developed a Common Appraisal Framework for Transport Projects which is regularly updated, and operates in conjunction with the Public Spending Code, providing detailed guidance on how to appraise the value for money of a proposed project, for submission to my Department and the Department of PER.

My Department also evaluates ongoing or completed projects and programmes. Recent evaluations published by my Department include a 2015 Focused Policy Assessment of the Green Schools Programme, a 2015 Value for Money and Policy Assessment of the National Roads Maintenance Programme, and a 2017 Value for Money and Policy Assessment of the Driver Testing Service. Each of these evaluations provided useful recommendations on how to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of these programmes.

Tourism Policy

1119. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the degree to which efforts continue to distribute the tourism industry evenly throughout the country with particular reference to the development of facilities at required locations having particular regard to assessments carried out to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25672/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): My Department is primarily involved in the development of national tourism policy, while the tourism agencies have responsibility for the implementation of this policy.

In this regard, Fáilte Ireland is responsible for the development of the Irish tourism industry, including regional tourism. Accordingly, I have referred the Deputy's question to the agency for further information and direct reply.

Local authorities now also have a greater hands-on responsibility in terms of tourism development, something that has been a positive recent development in my opinion. Fáilte Ireland continues to distribute capital funding on a range of facility improvement works which I am sure they will inform the Deputy further about in their further response. The Government is committed to broadening the seasonality and regionality of tourism for the benefit of every community in Ireland.

Government measures like the scrapping of the Airport Tax and the introduction of the reduced 9% VAT rate have all helped to improve the industry and grow jobs to a point where over 235,000 people are now employed directly in tourism in all parts of Ireland. Developing regional experiences like the Wild Atlantic Way, Ireland's Ancient East and the Hidden Heartlands are central to this overall ethos.

I thank Deputy Durkan for his continued and persistent raising of tourism related matters with me and assure him of my continued co-operation with him in this important area. I ask him

to advise my private office if he does not receive a reply within ten working days.

Tourism Industry

1120. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the extent to which potential growth opportunities for business tourism here continue to be identified; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25673/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin): Business tourism has been an area of growth in recent years and the tourism agencies, who have operational responsibility for the development of this sector, have been very active in securing conference and incentive business. I have asked both Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland to provide the Deputy with information directly on the potential growth opportunities for the sector. I ask the Deputy to my private office if he has not received a reply within ten working days.

Public Transport Review

1121. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the extent to which a study has been carried out or is ongoing in respect of public transport in County Kildare with particular reference to the need to address deficiencies in respect of daily frequency of rail and bus services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25674/18]

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. The National Transport Authority (NTA) has responsibility for the development and implementation of public transport infrastructure in the GDA, including County Kildare.

In light of the NTA's responsibility in this matter, I have forwarded the Deputy's question to the NTA for further update.

Rail Services Provision

1122. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans for investment in the rail services over the next five years including an extension to services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25675/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The recently published National Development Plan (NDP) 2018-2027 sets out the Government capital investment priorities for the coming decade. Many transport investments that we intend to undertake nationwide within that 10-year period will be to protect the quality and value of our existing rail-based networks and also the delivery of heavy rail, DART, light rail and metro-based programmes and underlying projects, all to provide additional capacity. Planning of the large projects (e.g. DART Expansion and MetroLink) is now underway and they are scheduled for delivery progressively over the life-time of the 10-year NDP. Meanwhile, in the shorter term, various measures and schemes are being taken to ensure more efficient functioning of the rail networks and the provision of additional capacity. These measures, involving the National Transport Authority (NTA), agencies and railway operators, are as follows:

- Completion of the city centre re-signalling project, which allows more train movements

across critical parts of the rail network and thereby allows for more and quicker services;

- From September 2018, the recently opened Kildare route Phoenix Park tunnel services to Docklands will be extended to off-peak periods, as well as peak periods;

- Currently a contract is underway to introduce 28 carriages to re-enter service in 2019;

- Later this year, an all-day 10 minute DART service will be introduced across all lines;

- Planning for the delivery of the DART Expansion Programme will commence, including, in 2018; beginning the procurement to expand the DART rail fleet; progress the electrification of, the Northern rail line as far as Balbriggan; beginning work on the Maynooth line;

- Investment in new train fleet, including a planned move to hybrid diesel-electric trains that can run on both the electrified and non-electrified parts of the rail network and thereby allow passenger services to be upgraded earlier (e.g. introducing higher frequency timetables) without having to wait until the electrification project is fully completed;

- Luas-related measures will be implemented to provide additional capacity; A new timetable will be published in June to make best use of the new 55-metre trams that have been introduced with Luas Cross City and also a shuttle service between Heuston and Connolly on the Red Line.

- It is intended to add further additional Green Line Luas Capacity, by lengthening the 26 existing trams from 43m to 55m. The first extended tram will come online in late 2019, and the final by late 2021. Beyond that it is intended that a further 8 new 55m trams will be delivered and introduced into service.

All this planned investment, short, medium and long-term, combined will add greatly to the level of service available for the travelling public, connecting more people with more places, easing congestion and combatting climate change.

Regional Airports

1123. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the extent to which he plans to support and promote the role of regional airports; if a particular initiative is required in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25676/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Our National Aviation Policy acknowledges the role played by the regional airports as being important in promoting a level of international connectivity to support the tourism and business sectors in their regions.

In this regard the new National Development Plan, Project Ireland 2040, provides for continued Exchequer support for the smaller regional airports through my Department's Regional Airports Programme.

Funding support under this Programme is targeted at grant-aiding investments and activities in the areas of safety and security and to assist the smaller airports in ensuring compliance with international regulatory requirements in these areas.

A fortnight ago, I announced an allocation of €3.85 million in grant aid towards capital investments at the airports in Donegal, Ireland West Airport Knock and Kerry.

The Regional Airports Programme will continue to support necessary safety and security

investments by these airports to ensure that they can continue to contribute to enhanced regional connectivity.

Tourism Data

1124. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the extent to which particular sectors of the tourism sector to date in 2018 have shown particular potential for growth with consequent economic benefit in the future; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25677/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): After a number of very successful years, indications are that 2018 will prove to be another good year for tourism in Ireland. Sentiment in the industry both overseas and here at home is generally positive for the remainder of 2018. Tourism Ireland's aim is to grow overseas tourism revenue by a further 5% this year and to increase the number of overseas visitors by 2%.

The early signs are promising, with the CSO reporting in its Overseas Travel release that overseas trips to Ireland for the first four months of the year, at over 2.8 million visits, were up 7.3% on 2017, as follows:

- Visits from North America were up by 13.6%
- Visits from Mainland Europe were up by 12.3%
- Great Britain registered an increase of 1.1% in visits, and
- Visits from the rest of the world (long-haul) increased by 2.9%.

While the data only covers four months and it is too early to predict how the rest of the year might fare, it is a welcome start which indicates that we are well placed to build further on the outstanding growth of recent years. Revenue figures for overseas visitors in Q1 are due to be published this week and should also be positive based on the visitor numbers.

There is no CSO data published yet for domestic tourism in 2018 but indications are positive following a difficult, weather-related, start to the year. Fáilte Ireland reported in its Tourism Barometer in April that hotels have reported a strong performance from the domestic market.

Fáilte Ireland estimates that tourism now supports approximately 235,000 jobs across the country, making it a vital indigenous economic sector and one that supports communities in both rural and urban areas. Whilst we cannot be complacent about continued growth in tourism, the outlook for the remainder of the year looks positive.

Tourism Data

1125. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the extent to which his Department has identified the degree to which potential growth of the tourism sector region by region with particular reference to the use of historical sites, monuments and buildings; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25678/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin): The tourism potential of the various regions is developed and promoted in line with the relevant tourism brand experiences - namely Ireland's Hidden Heartlands, Ireland's

Ancient East, the Wild Atlantic Way and the Dublin brand - which are the overarching context for related tourism product development, marketing and enterprise support.

Promoting and leveraging the appeal of Ireland's culture and heritage are an intrinsic element of all the tourism brand experiences. However, with specific regard to our historical and built heritage, these are particularly to the fore in Ireland's Ancient East, which has an especially rich and diverse range of such heritage experiences - including passage tombs, monastic sites and medieval castles.

As the development of the brand experiences is a matter for Fáilte Ireland, I have asked the agency to reply directly to the Deputy's question. I ask him to contact my private office if he has not received a reply within ten working days.

Questions Nos. 1126 and 1127 answered with Question No. 1108.

EU Data

1128. Deputy Michael McGrath asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the EU fines paid in each of the years 2015 to 2017, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25737/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport did not pay any EU fines during the period referred to.

Disability Services Data

1129. Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the funding available for the access inclusion model for pre-school children with special needs over the past five years; the number of children accessing the model; the number of SNAs directly employed through the model; the cost per child budgeted for in the service model in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [24447/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) is a programme of supports to enable children with a disability to access and fully participate in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme. It was introduced in June 2016 and is administered by Pobal on behalf of my Department. AIM is a child-centred model, involving seven levels of progressive support, moving from the universal to the targeted, based on the needs of the child and the pre-school setting.

AIM expenditure amounted to €7m in 2016, its first year. An amount of €22.2m was spent on AIM in 2017 and funding of €25m has been provided for AIM in 2018.

Since its introduction, the universal elements of AIM have benefitted a large proportion of children in the ECCE programme, both those with disabilities and those without, through training and support to ECCE settings in the provision of inclusive early years care and education.

Targeted supports directly benefit children with disabilities and may also benefit children without additional needs, for example, where the adult-to-child ratio in the pre-school room is reduced. In its first year targeted AIM supports were accessed by 2,486 children (accounting for 4,760 different supports), to ensure that they could fully participate in the ECCE programme. In the second year of AIM from September 2017 to date, targeted AIM supports have been accessed by 3,838 children (accounting for 6,230 different supports), to ensure that they

can fully participate in the ECCE programme.

Level 7 of AIM provides additional assistance in the pre-school room where this is critical to ensuring a child's participation in the ECCE Programme. In line with emerging best practice to support the integration and independence of children with a disability, AIM does not fund Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) or equivalent staff. Rather, it provides financial support to the pre-school provider which the provider may use either to reduce the adult-to-child ratio in the pre-school room by reducing the number of children in the room or to buy in additional assistance to the pre-school room. Neither Pobal nor my Department has a direct role in the recruitment of staff for pre-schools, which are operated independently by either private or not-for-profit entities.

AIM is not budgeted on a cost-per-child basis, as it combines both universal and targeted supports, and for many children with special needs the universal supports offered under the model will be sufficient. For others, one particular discrete support may be required to enable participation in the ECCE Programme, such as access to a piece of specialised equipment. For a small number, a suite of different services and supports may be necessary. In other words, the model is designed to be responsive to the needs of each individual child in the context of their pre-school setting.

Child Care Services Data

1130. Deputy Peadar Tóibín asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the amount of naónraí operating here; and the number of children attending same. [24638/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): A Naónra is defined as a playgroup run through Irish for children (aged 3-5 years), who attend daily for 2-3 hours, under the guidance and supervision of a Stiúrthóir (Leader).

Research indicates that children make significant advances in Irish language development during their time in a Naónra, which leads to increased use of Irish in their homes as their parents try to help them acquire the language.

Officials from my Department contacted Pobal who confirmed that, currently, there are 228 childcare services that identify as Naónraí on the PIP system. Since the start of the current programme year a total of 10,475 children have registered for supports at these services.

Child Protection

1131. Deputy Clare Daly asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs further to Parliamentary Question No. 1676 of 11 September 2017, when a response from Tusla will be forthcoming. [24242/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I am aware that a considerable length of time has passed since the most recent update from Tusla in relation to this matter. I have written to Tusla, the Child and Family Agency to request an update and will write to the Deputy once I have had their response.

Child and Family Agency Reports

1132. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she will provide a copy of the inquiry report by a person (details supplied). [24243/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I have requested Tusla to respond directly to the Deputy. I have asked Tusla to furnish me with a copy of the response.

Family Resource Centres

1133. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs further to Parliamentary Question No. 192 of 16 May 2018, if further funding will be allocated for family resource centre programmes in budget 2019; the category in which a centre (details supplied) has to improve a future application to provide a family resource centre; and the nature of Tusla's plans to deliver through its commissioning approach for the Dublin 12 area. [24269/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Family support is an important priority for me, and the increased level of funding for Family Resource Centres in 2018 reflects this. Family Resource Centres are front-line services rooted in the communities they serve. Acting as a focal point within their communities, Family Resource Centres provide a holistic service of child, family and community support and advocacy to all children and families in their communities.

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

Tusla administers the Family Resource Centre Programme. As part of the decision making process in choosing 11 new Family Resource Centres to join the Programme, Tusla engaged with local Tusla staff in areas around the country, as well as local Children and Young People's Service Committees (CYPSCs).

As outlined in my previous response to the Deputy, Tusla has advised me that the quality of applications received was of a very high standard. Tusla has indicated that the organisation to which the Deputy refers is welcome to seek specific feedback on its application from Tusla, with a view to future development.

Tusla has identified a need for family support services in specified areas of the country, including the Dublin 12 area. Tusla particularly wishes to develop its family support services in disadvantaged areas and will seek to allocate future funding according to the results of needs analysis projects across the country.

Decisions with regard to funding levels in 2019 will be taken in the context of the Estimates process. It is not possible therefore at this stage to advise on what level of funding will be available to family support services or the Family Resource Centre Programme next year. However, I strongly value this work, and I will certainly be making the case for a continued investment in family support services in 2019 and beyond.

National Educational Psychological Service

1134. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if funding will continue to be provided to schools for counselling (details supplied); and if she

will make a statement on the matter. [24278/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): In response to the Deputy's question I wish to highlight that the Department of Education and Skills through the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) provides assistance to all schools that experience critical incidents. As highlighted such incidents can arise if a tragedy befalls a school community.

My Department offers some counselling supports to schools through a small scale grant provision for counselling supports to children who have experienced bereavement or loss.

This grant scheme was operated in the past by the Family Support Agency (FSA) when it was established in 2003 and then subsequently to Tusla on establishment in January 2014.

Up until 2011 applications were invited through an annual public advertisement. The scheme was then capped for financial reasons and no new applications have been accepted since that time.

Those who received funding in 2011 have continued to receive an annual grant. This Counselling Grants Scheme is for a total of €245,900 annually and currently there are 64 grantees nationwide benefitting from it.

This situation will continue as is for 2018 so as to ensure the provision of counselling supports for those within the Counselling Grants Scheme.

Youth Services Funding

1135. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if funding is available for schools or other organisations to provide safer social media alternatives to children and young persons. [24382/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): My Department does not provide funding directly to schools or youth organisations to provide safer social media alternatives to children and young persons. However my Department does provide general youth funding under the youth services grant scheme to three national youth organisations which provide on-line safety resources for the youth sector. The National Youth Council of Ireland provides the Web Safety in Youth Work Resource, SpunOut has developed an online safety hub which provides guidelines for young people on on-line safety and Youth Work Ireland, in conjunction with McAfee Security, has developed a digital safety programme which highlights the risks associated with on-line activity.

Affordable Childcare Scheme

1136. **Deputy Denise Mitchell** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the estimated additional cost in 2018 of increasing the universal minimum subsidy across the affordable childcare scheme, assuming the minimum targeted subsidy is increased in tandem in 50 cent intervals up to an additional €4.50 reaching €5 per hour, assuming a start date of September; the estimated cost for a full year; and the number of children that would benefit. [24417/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I am replying to the Deputy on the understanding that she is referring to the Community Childcare Subvention (Universal) Scheme (CCSU).

Questions - Written Answers

As part of the Government policy to make childcare more affordable, in September 2017 I introduced a universal childcare subvention payment of up to €20 per week for families using eligible childcare providers for the care of children aged from 6 months to the first eligible point of entry to the ECCE scheme.

The maximum weekly universal childcare subsidy is €20. As CCS subsidies are currently paid according to session type, i.e. full-time, part-time, sessional, half-session, this maximum weekly universal subsidy rate of €20 is paid on a pro-rata basis according to session type and is not paid on an hourly basis. Please see the following table for a breakdown of the rates per session type.

UCS Session Type	Weekly Subsidy
Full-time (i.e. 5 hours plus per day)	€20
Part-time (i.e. 3 hours 31 minutes to 5 hours per day)	€10
Sessional (i.e. 2 hours 16 minutes to 3 hours 30 minutes per day)	€7
Half-session (i.e. 1 hour 15 minutes to 2 hours 15 minutes per day)	€3.50

The subsidy-rates according to session type are based on a rate of 50 cents per hour, allocated pro-rata depending on the number of hours per week the child attends a childcare service. The maximum rate of €20 per week - for full-time childcare - is based on 40 hours of childcare per week.

On the basis of the most recent data regarding the number of children availing of the universal payment across all session types and assuming no change in demand, the table below shows estimates of the full year cost of CCSU at the current rate of 50 cent per hour and the projected full year cost of CCSU if increased by 50 cent intervals up to €5 per hour. It should be stressed that the projected full-year cost of €170.8m is based on an assumption that the demand for childcare would not change in response to the increase in the universal subsidy. If the increased subsidy were to lead to an increase in the demand for childcare, then the cost of the measure would rise accordingly.

Table 2 Universal Subsidy (CCSU) rates

CCSU at	Full year cost
50c per hour	€17,085,831
€1.00 per hour	€34,171,663
€1.50 per hour	€51,257,495
€2.00 per hour	€68,343,327
€2.50 per hour	€85,429,159
€3.00 per hour	€102,514,991
€3.50 per hour	€119,600,823
€4.00 per hour	€136,686,655
€4.50 per hour	€153,772,487
€5.00 per hour	€170,858,319

Early Childhood Care and Education

1137. Deputy Denise Mitchell asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs her plans to introduce a second entry point for the ECCE scheme in order to ensure that children that turn two years of age at the beginning of a year and are therefore too young for the September entry point do not have to wait until the following year to avail of the free preschool year. [24435/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Under provisions announced as part of Budget 2018 all children will be eligible for two full programme years (a total of 76 weeks) of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) from September 2018 once the child meets the minimum age requirement of 2 years and 8 months at the end of the month before the ECCE intake date.

Current ECCE provision averages at 61 weeks, up from 38 weeks when ECCE was first introduced. However, the three ECCE entry points, which were available for the years 2016/2017 and 2017/2018, meant that there were inconsistencies in the number of free preschool weeks; ranging from 61 weeks to 88 weeks depending on the child's date of birth. This was perceived as unfair by many parents. The new measures being introduced from September 2018 will address these inconsistencies and will ensure a programme that is equitable for all children and also delivers fully on a commitment in the Programme for a Partnership Government that is good for children, families and Early Years providers.

The number of entry points will revert to one at the beginning of the 2018 programme year (September). This single entry point will support quality service provision principally by making it easier for services to provide continuity of staffing through the programme year. The single enrolment will also help streamline the administration process and will make it easier for childcare providers to operate and budget for the programme year. This will also make it easier for parents to secure ECCE places for their children.

While there are no immediate plans to alter the ECCE rules beyond the changes being introduced in September 2018, my Department is currently reviewing the operation of overage exemptions in the scheme.

Child Abuse

1138. Deputy Anne Rabbitte asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of Garda division headquarters that are collaborating with Tusla in relation to dealing with cases of child abuse in view of the recommendations by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [24541/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I take it that the Deputy is referring to the development of joint working relationships through Divisional Child Protection Units being established by An Garda Síochána.

I can confirm that there are currently four Divisional Child Protection Units (DCPUs) operating, one each in Cork, Louth, Blanchardstown and Clondalkin. The development of these units is a welcome basis for enhanced Tusla/Garda Síochána engagement.

I understand that in An Garda Síochána Policing Plan 2018, a target of an additional four DPSUs was agreed, and I am informed that it is anticipated that this target will be achieved in 2018.

Questions - Written Answers
Programme for Government

1139. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the status of the implementation of A Programme for A Partnership Government as it applies to her Department; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [24571/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): My Department reports to the Department of the Taoiseach on progress made in relation to actions under the remit of my Department and contained in the Programme for a Partnership Government. The Department of the Taoiseach publishes, on its website, progress reports on actions contained in the Programme, covering all Departments. The reports can be accessed at the following website: www.taoiseach.gov.ie/eng/Work_Of_The_Department/Programme_for_Government/Programme_for_Government.html.

I am informed that the Programme for a Partnership Government Annual Report, 2018, to which my Department has provided input, will shortly be published by the Department of the Taoiseach on its website.

Child Protection

1140. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs her views on amendments made to section 22 of the Public Health (Alcohol) Bill 2015 from a child protection perspective in view of the fact that the separation barrier must only be 1.2 metres in height, the average height of a seven year old according to recent UK research (details supplied); if she was consulted in the drafting of this legislation from a child protection perspective; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [24624/18]

1141. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she is satisfied with section 22 of the Public Health (Alcohol) Bill 2015 from a child protection perspective in view of the fact that children over seven years of age will continue to be exposed to alcohol in a supermarket setting; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [24625/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1140 and 1141 together.

A core principle underpinning child protection policy in Ireland is that all sectors have a responsibility to keep children safe from harm. In accordance with this, Government policy is that child protection concerns should be dealt with in the setting or sector in which they arise.

The Public Health (Alcohol) Bill 2015 is the responsibility of my colleague, the Minister for Health, and, as the Deputy will be aware, this and any proposed legislation is circulated to Cabinet for consultation and approval before publication.

I understand that the Bill is progressing through the Houses of the Oireachtas. Section 22, as it currently stands, provides for restrictions on the display and advertisement of alcohol products in mixed trade retail outlets. While the safeguards proposed in the legislation place obligations on retailers, parental responsibility is also an important protective factor.

HSE Funding

1142. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the way in

which a person (details supplied) who was a resident in a location can access funding in relation to travelling costs incurred from Killimor, Ballinasloe, County Galway to Ballinasloe, County Galway in order for them to access counselling services. [24657/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I thank the Deputy for raising this particular case with me. I am deeply conscious that giving testimony to a Commission of Investigation, or otherwise revisiting difficult personal experiences, can be distressing for many former residents and some may need to access various supports in dealing with these issues.

I am aware that the Health Service Executive (HSE) provides counselling services and can provide transport services/supports in certain circumstances to assist in accessing services provided on its behalf. Relevant HSE contact details are available on my Department's website and also included in the monthly e-zine update on mother and baby home issues. However, the arrangements and eligibility for any such supports are matters for the HSE and the Department of Health.

I will make enquiries with the Department of Health on behalf of the person concerned and revert directly to the Deputy in this regard.

Child and Family Agency Data

1143. **Deputy Noel Rock** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of cases awaiting allocation to a social worker in each Tusla local office area in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [24686/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Information about cases awaiting allocation is published monthly on the Tusla website. The most up to date data available is for March 2018. I can inform the Deputy that there were a total of 4,662 cases awaiting allocation to a social worker at the end of March. Of these, 734 were designated as high priority, 2,968 as medium priority and 960 as low priority.

An unallocated case relates to a case about a child that is deemed to need a social work assessment, but has not yet been allocated to a social worker. All urgent and emergency cases receive immediate attention by the local duty social work team. The majority of unallocated cases are new referrals. However, they may also include children living with their families who had an allocated social worker, or to a child in care, where there is a social work vacancy at the moment.

I am informed by Tusla that a case awaiting allocation may be listed as 'active on duty'. Tusla indicate that this may include checking with professionals who see the child regularly, or visiting the child and family at home, getting additional information about the child's situation and, in some instances where a child is in care, organising a Care Plan Review and visiting the child.

Tusla has provided information on the number of cases awaiting allocation to a social worker per administrative area. This information is included in the following table.

Cases awaiting allocation to a social worker March 2018 – numbers and priority level

Area	Total Cases Awaiting Allocation	High Priority Awaiting Allocation	Medium Priority Awaiting Allocation	Low Priority Awaiting Allocation
Dublin South East/Wicklow	124	15	86	23
Dublin South West/Kildare/ West Wicklow	647	176	432	39
Dublin South Central	136	0	49	87
Midlands	345	80	202	63
Dublin North City	384	8	265	111
Dublin North	432	0	240	192
Louth/Meath	273	26	217	30
Cavan/Monaghan	189	5	134	50
Kerry	90	73	16	1
Cork	622	148	440	34
Carlow/Kilkenny/ South Tipperary	448	48	313	87
Waterford/Wexford	95	0	50	45
Donegal	372	52	237	83
Sligo/Leitrim/ West Cavan	37	0	28	9
Mayo	0	0	0	0
Galway/Roscommon	249	41	199	9
Midwest	219	62	60	97
Total Cases	4,662	734	2968	960

Addressing the number of children who are awaiting the allocation of a social worker is one of my key priorities. I secured funds in Budget 2018 which will allow Tusla to complete the final year of a three year plan to provide for additional social workers. Tusla are also funded to recruit family support workers, social care staff and administrative staff to work alongside social workers in supporting vulnerable children and families.

I, and my officials, will continue to engage directly with the Tusla Board and Senior Management Team to monitor and review progress in reducing the number of unallocated cases.

Early Childhood Care and Education Programmes

1144. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if the assessment under the AIM programme for a child (details supplied) in County Cork has been completed in order that they can access the support they need in September 2018; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [24970/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): AIM is a model of supports designed to ensure that children with a disability can access the Early Childhood

Care and Education (ECCE) programme.

AIM is a child-centred model, involving seven levels of progressive support, moving from the universal to the targeted. The level of support provided depends both on the needs of the child and on the strengths and needs of the pre-school setting.

Where a child in receipt of targeted AIM support moves pre-school, a new application must be submitted by the new pre-school in collaboration with the child's parents, as the level and type of support needed depends on the new pre-school's strengths and needs.

AIM is administered by Pobal on behalf of the DCYA. The application process, which involves submission of an Access and Inclusion Profile, is currently open. Both the Pobal AIM team and the Better Start team are currently reviewing AIM applications and are endeavouring to ensure that applications are reviewed and outcomes communicated to applicants prior to commencement in pre-school.

At present, Pobal has not received a new Access and Inclusion Profile for the child in question. It is recommended that an application is submitted as soon as possible. If the applicants require any support with the submission of an AIM application, they should contact onlinesupport@pobal.ie.

Departmental Funding

1145. Deputy Róisín Shortall asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of requests for additional funding, staff resources or expertise that have been made by Tusla since January 2014, in tabular form; the purpose of the requested additional funding, staff resources or expertise; the section to which this request related; the response to each request; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25039/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): As the Deputy will be aware, funding requirements and how resources should be prioritised and allocated across each area of Government spending are generally considered as part of the annual estimates cycle and budgetary process. As part of the process and in accordance with the arrangements in place in my Department for evaluating yearly funding requirements, Tusla is required to submit a detailed business case setting out the basis for its funding requirements. My overriding objective is to realise funding allocations which reflect policy priorities and that sufficient resources are directed towards those areas of greatest impact on children and young people.

When Tusla was established in 2014, they received an initial allocation of €609 million. On the basis of its annual estimates engagement with the Department, Tusla has received year-on-year increases resulting in an annual allocation for 2018 of €754 million. This represents an overall increase of €145 million or 24% in the period since establishment. Details of the annual funding allocations, including the current and capital resource provisions, are set out in the following table:

-	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
-	€m	€m	€m	€m	€m
Current	602	631	662	699	740
Capital	7	12	14	14	14
Allocation	609	643	676	713	754

The extra resources allocated to Tusla has significantly strengthened its base funding, facilitated the agency in meeting identified service pressures and areas of particular risk. In line with

statutory requirements under the Child and Family Agency Act 2013, Tusla publishes its annual business plan which outlines proposed activities and performance targets for each year which includes proposed allocation of the total resources (both financial and human).

School Completion Programme

1146. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she has received correspondence from the Department of Education and Skills in relation to concerns regarding the school completion programme; if so, the details of those concerns; and the way in which those concerns will be addressed. [25137/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): While my Department has received no specific correspondence from the Department of Education and Skills in relation to the School Completion Programme I am very conscious that the Programme delivers a valuable service for some of our most vulnerable young people.

With this in mind, the Board of Tusla convened an expert panel to identify and examine a potential revised model of good practice and governance of the School Completion Programme.

The panel comprised an external legal expert, representation of Tusla Educational Welfare Service, Finance, HR and Legal units, representatives from the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, Department of Education and Skills and Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. It was chaired by the Tusla CEO.

The expert panel has concluded its work. When I examined its findings, I decided to carry out some further discussions with a number of other stakeholders. To this end I hosted a very informative School Completion Consultation event in Farmleigh House on January 29th last.

Matters discussed included best practice and governance within the School Completion Programme. There was a range of views expressed as to how both these elements could be improved to ensure that the best service possible is delivered to those who need it.

Following the Farmleigh event I have asked the facilitator for the day to do some additional work on a possible way forward, I have received this input very recently.

I have deliberated carefully over this process for some time because the issues are complex and I want to achieve the best possible results for the young people who use the service and for the professionals who deliver it. I wish to see plans for the development of the SCP advanced in this quarter.

I am very much aware of the positive outcomes that have been achieved within the School Completion Programme.

For example, the proportion of students in DEIS schools who completed the senior cycle has increased from 68% in 2006/2007 to 82% by 2016. This illustrates the benefit of the programme.

I can assure the Deputy that my Department and Tusla Educational Welfare Service are fully committed to the future of the School Completion Programme and will continue to work to ensure that it will deliver the best possible outcomes for young people at risk of early school-leaving.

1147. D'fhiatraigh **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** den Aire Leanaí agus Gnóthaí Óige cad iad na tacaíochtaí breise Gaeilge a bheidh á gcur ar fáil i mbliana agus cé mhéad airgead a chaithfear ar na tacaíochtaí sin do na suíomhanna luathbhlianta atá ag feidhmiú trí Ghaeilge sa Ghaeltacht faoin bPolasaí don Oideachas Gaeltachta [25148/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Is mór againn go léir sa Roinn seo cúnamh na seirbhísí chúram leanaí sa Ghaeltacht chomh maith leis an ról tábhachtach atá ag Naíonraí ar fud na tíre.

San am a chuaigh thart, ní raibh na tacaíochtaí do sheirbhísí chúram leanaí a fheidhmíonn trí Ghaeilge i gcónaí chomh maith agus ab fhéidir nó chomh agus ba cheart dóibh a bheith, agus glacaim leis sin. Tá sé sin ag athrú. Bhunaigh mé Fóram Luathbhlianta in 2016 chun dul i gcomhairle le páirtithe tábhachtacha leasmhara san earnáil agus chuir mé dhá áit ar fáil d'ionadaithe Gaeilge ar an bhFóram. Bhí siad ina n-ionadaithe do sheirbhísí luathbhlianta a fheidhmíonn sa Ghaeltacht agus tá siad tar éis roinnt ceisteanna a tharraingt anuas liom go díreach.

Go háirthe le sé mhí anuas, tá iarrachtaí móra déanta chun teaghmáil níos fearr le seirbhísí chúram leanaí a fheidhmíonn trí Ghaeilge a áirithíú. Dáileadh leabhráin eolais agus póstaer, a bhaineann lenár bhfoirdheontais nua chúram leanaí, ar sheirbhísí Gaeilge agus anois tá faisnéis oibríochtúil agus cumarsáid laethúil á scaipeadh sa dá theanga go rialta. Na bileoga agus na póstaer atá le scaipeadh sna seachtainí atá amach romhainn ar chlinicí dochtúirí teaghlaigh, ar leabharlanna agus ar cheantair phoiblí eile, tá siad ullmhaithe sa dá theanga. Tá roinnt cainteoirí Gaeilge earcaithe d'Aonad na Luathbhlianta i mo Roinn agus tá siad ag cabhrú leis an obair seo agus lenár gcomhoibriú leanúnach.

Tá Plean Gnímh 5 Bliana, a eascraíonn ón Straitéis 20 Bliain don Ghaeilge, á fhorbairt ag an Roinn Cultúir, Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta i gcomhairle leis an Roinn seo agus leis an Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna. Tá gníomhartha faoi leith sa phlean gnímh seo atá le cur i bhfeidhm i réimse na suíomhanna luathbhlianta. Sa phlean, tá an Roinn Leanaí agus Gnóthaí Óige freagrach as cur i bhfeidhm roinnt gníomhartha uileghabhálacha chun oideachais trí Ghaeilge a thacú i naíonraí lasmuigh den Ghaeltacht.

Chomh maith leis sin, tá obair ar bun faoi láthair chun a chinntíú go mbeidh rochtain ag Gaeilgeoirí ar ár gcórais IT amach anseo, an Scéim Chúram Leanaí Inacmhainne mar shampla, agus tá soláthróirí chúram leanaí agus tuismitheoirí araon i gceist leis sin.

Early Childhood Care and Education

1148. **Deputy Denise Mitchell** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the estimated cost to roll out the routine delivery of Aistear across the childminding sector including those childminders not registered with Tusla. [25166/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Roll-out of the Aistear curriculum framework is supported through initial education programmes for early years practitioners (including childminders) as well as through mentoring supports. The National Síolta Aistear Initiative provides funding for mentors in City/County Childcare Committees and Voluntary Childcare Organisations to offer mentoring and quality improvement supports to early years settings. The primary purpose of the initiative is to increase awareness, understanding and implementation of the Síolta national quality framework and the Aistear curriculum framework. €500,000 was allocated to the Initiative in 2017.

The cost of extending quality supports to non-registered childminders cannot be readily estimated because of the lack of firm data on the number of childminders. An expert working

group on childminding, which submitted a report to the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs in March 2018, estimated that there may be approximately 35,000 childminders, but noted that the figure is an estimate because the very large majority of childminders are outside the statutory regulatory system. Fewer than 120 childminders are currently registered with Tusla.

The expert working group's report, *Pathway to a Quality Support and Assurance System for Childminding*, outlines a vision for the development of the childminding sector in Ireland over the next decade, and sets out short, medium and longer-term recommendations. The Department of Children and Youth Affairs is currently considering the recommendations contained in the report, with a view to developing an action plan within the next year for the wider regulation and support of the childminding sector, including supports for the quality of childminding practice.

Departmental Funding

1149. Deputy Denise Mitchell asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if non-contact time payments will be available in 2018; and if so, when services can apply for same. [25167/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I am pleased to inform you that the €18m paid initially in 2017 and secured in my vote in Budget 2018 will be paid to childcare providers in June 2018 in the form of the Programme Support Payment (PSP), formerly referred to as the 'non-contact time' payment. This payment is in recognition of the important administrative role that childcare providers play in the delivery of childcare schemes (ECCE, CCS and TEC).

The window for applications for Programme Support Payment opened on Wednesday 6th June and will remain open until Friday 22nd June inclusive. The intention is that payments can then be made to childcare providers in the last week of June. The Programme Support Payment will be apportioned out among childcare providers based on the proportion of registrations in each service.

Frequently asked questions on the Programme Support Payment 2018 are on the Department's website.

Commencement of Legislation

1150. Deputy Mattie McGrath asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the sections and parts of all legislation brought forward by her Department in each of the past four years that have yet to be commenced; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25172/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The Children (Amendment) Act 2015, the Child Care (Amendment) Act 2015 and the Adoption (Amendment) Act 2017 have provisions awaiting commencement as follows:

Children (Amendment) Act 2015

Sections 6 (as it relates to section 88B), 8,9,10,16,18,19 and 26 of the Children (Amendment) Act 2015 relate to the introduction of a new system of remission in the children detention schools and a technical issue relating to the operation of the Children Court on the issuing of detention orders under the Children Act 2001 and have not been commenced. It is intended that the relevant sections of the Children (Amendment) Act 2015 dealing with remission and the

issuing of detention orders will be commenced in 2018.

Child Care (Amendment) Act 2015

Section 13 and Schedule 1 Part 1 (insofar as those provisions relate to the amendments specified in items 1, 2, 6 and 9 of that Part of that Schedule) have not yet been commenced. These amendments are technical in nature and will be commenced in line with children's residential centres becoming designated centres under the Health Act 2007.

Adoption (Amendment) Act 2017

A number of definitions in section 3 of the Adoption (Amendment) Act 2017 relate to Parts 2 and 3 of the Children and Family Relationships Act 2015 and will not be commenced until the relevant provisions in that Act are commenced.

Departmental Strategies

1151. Deputy Mattie McGrath asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the status of measures introduced to increase the national birth rate; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25200/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Following a clarification, I understand the Deputy to be referring to the Baby Box pilot initiative.

"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.

Early Years Sector

1152. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the grounds on which an application was not granted as part of the Capital Programme 2018 - EYC 2018 strand 1 in the case of a person (details supplied); the procedure to be followed in respect

of an appeal of the decision; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25203/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Significant efforts were made this year to announce the successful applications for the Early Years and School Age Childcare Capital programmes earlier in the year to facilitate works over the summer. The appraisal process for applications has now been completed.

Over 1,900 applications for funding were received by the closing date of Wednesday 14th March 2018. All applications were appraised in a fair, thorough and impartial manner by Pobal on behalf of the Department.

I regret to say that on this occasion, Cadamstown Montessori's application under Early Years Strand 1 did not result in an offer of funding.

The competition for the capital programme this year was particularly strong and regrettably this meant that many high quality applications fell short of the mark required to access the available funding.

Services that were not successful have been informed that they can phone Pobal and request a call-back on their application. Pobal will provide them with feedback and guidance on their application, including what steps to take if they wish to have their application formally reviewed. Information on this process was included in the correspondence sent to providers by Pobal following capital decisions.

Child and Family Agency

1153. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the way in which the €40.5 million additional funding for Tusla in 2018 will be spent; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25247/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): In 2018, Tusla, the Child and Family Agency received a budget allocation of some €753 million from my Department's voted expenditure, which includes an extra €40.6 million over its 2017 allocation.

Late last year, I issued Tusla with its 2018 Performance Statement in line with the provisions of the Child and Family Agency Act, 2013. In the 2018 Performance Statement, I indicated my priorities to Tusla for this year including:

- actions to support mandatory reporting under the Children First Act, 2015,
- addressing gaps in out of hours services, and
- further investment in Family Resource Centres in local communities that deliver services to families, especially in disadvantaged areas across the country.

I am pleased that the extra funding secured will also allow Tusla to recruit over 300 additional staff, reduce the number of unallocated cases, improve its ICT infrastructure, and advance further developments in areas such as Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence services, adoption, aftercare, and homelessness supports.

Tusla prepared its Business Plan for 2018, on foot of the 2018 Performance Statement, setting out its proposed main areas of spending. The 2018 Tusla Business Plan is available on the Tusla website www.tusla.ie.

I strongly support the work of Tusla and I am committed to providing resources to meet the growing needs of children and families. The increased funding, which I have secured for Tusla in 2018, means that resources are available to meet key priorities in the years ahead.

Child and Family Agency Funding

1154. Deputy Michael Healy-Rae asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs her plans to provide extra funding for Tusla (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25340/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): On the 29th May 2018 I announced that Tusla, the Child and Family Agency had identified 126 cases where births were incorrectly registered between 1946 and 1969. The cases were identified during an analysis of adoption records that were transferred to Tusla by the former adoption society St Patrick's Guild.

It was during the course of working with these records and in particular the scanning of them that the issue of incorrect birth registrations was identified, with clear evidence of this practice recorded on index cards created and maintained by St Patrick's Guild. On foot of this discovery Tusla informed An Garda Síochána, the Mother and Baby Home Commission of Investigation and my Department. I moved immediately to inform the Cabinet, and to announce that a process has been put in place by Tusla to deal with these cases, led by experienced information and tracing social workers.

As an immediate step, Tusla put in place a Helpline, operating from 10 to 4 each day, Monday to Friday, and also put significant information on its website. Both provide information in relation to what to expect if you are one of the people affected by the incorrect registrations that have been identified in the records of St Patrick's Guild.

A social worker-led process of making contact with those affected that can be identified has commenced. This includes the person who was incorrectly registered (the child), the birth mother and the people who participated in the incorrect registrations and subsequently raised these children as their own.

Each of the 126 cases has been assigned an experienced information and tracing social worker and the cases have been prioritised.

I acknowledge that responding to these 126 cases will put Tusla's information and tracing services under pressure and as the Deputy is aware, there is already considerable demand for this service.

The appropriate mechanism to address resource issues is through the normal annual budgetary process. I would expect any additional resource requirements arising for Tusla in this, or in any other, service to be addressed in that context.

I would emphasise that the process will be measured, sensitive, and at the pace of the individual concerned. There will be no sudden phone calls or unannounced visits to people's doors. The process of offering contact and supporting those affected will be handled very carefully and will take account of the requirements of the individuals.

Departmental Budgets

1155. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs her Department's capital allocation in each of the years 2019 to 2023; and the areas to which funds will be allocated in each of those years. [25565/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The National Development Plan sets out the Government's capital investment priorities that will underpin the new National Planning Framework. My Department has been allocated €156 million in capital expenditure over the period 2018-2022 under the Plan as set out in the table below. The Deputy might note that the provisions for my Department in the year's post 2022 will be allocated through the annual Estimates process as the rolling five year multi-annual ceilings are updated.

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Capital Allocations (€ million)	28	32	31	32	33

It is not possible at this time to identify specific projects that will be funded under the Plan from 2019 to 2022 but I can confirm the resources will support continued investment in the following areas:

- Childcare, to ensure quality and supply of sufficient childcare places.
- Youth services that support and target disadvantaged young people and improve their employability.
- Tusla, through the continued development of ICT and standards of accommodation, and
- Oberstown Children Detention Campus through the provision of safe and secure places.

In addition to this, the Plan also contains a commitment to provide an additional €250 million to support the implementation of a 10 year, cross-Government Early Years Strategy to be published in 2018. One of the core objectives of this strategy will be to increase the proportion of children who have access to high quality, early years care and education. Officials in my Department are currently examining possibilities for a multi-annual capital programme for childcare as well as research on existing capital holdings and future capital needs for the sector, at national and local level. Once gathered, this data will be used to inform large-scale, targeted capital investments in childcare.

EU Data

1156. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the EU fines paid in each of the years 2015 to 2017, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25727/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The Deputy might note that no EU fines were paid by Department in the years 2015 to 2017.

Charities Regulation

1158. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the number of complaints received by the Charities Regulatory Authority about an exhibition (de-

tails supplied). [24395/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): While the Charities Regulatory Authority (the ‘Charities Regulator’) operates under the aegis of the Department of Rural and Community Development, Section 14(3) of the Charities Act 2009, provides that the Charities Regulator is independent in the performance of its statutory functions.

My Department has no function in the investigation of potential breaches of the Charities Act, and therefore, it does not hold or record data on complaints or correspondence with organisations regarding potential breaches. In addition, it should be noted that my Department has no function in reviewing the procedures the Charities Regulator has in place for investigating potential breaches of the Act.

I am informed that the Charities Regulator does not publish information about concerns received in relation to individual charities as to do so could unnecessarily undermine confidence in the charities concerned and furthermore could undermine the Regulator’s function to increase public trust and confidence in charities. However, I understand the Regulator intends to publish detailed aggregated information as part of a compliance report in the coming weeks.

Details of the Charity Regulator’s complaints and concerns policies (for members of the public who are concerned that an organisation may be operating in breach of the Charities Act 2009) are published on its website www.charitiesregulatoryauthority.ie.

Charities Regulation

1159. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the details of the appointment process of the 13 members of the Charities Regulatory Authority; when they were appointed; and when their position is due for renewal. [24398/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The appointment process for members of the Board of the Charities Regulatory Authority (CRA) is set out in the Charities Act, 2009. Schedule 1, section 2(1) of the Act states that the Authority shall consist of not less than nine and not greater than twenty members. At present, there are 13 appointed members on the Board. In accordance with Section 2(2) of schedule 1, all of the current Board members of the CRA have been appointed by the Minister, with the approval of the Government.

Appointments to the Board are made in line with the Guidelines on Appointments to State Boards which require that appointments are advertised openly on the State Boards portal www.stateboards.ie operated by the Public Appointments Service (PAS). Applications are processed by way of a transparent assessment system designed and implemented by PAS to support the Minister in making the appointments. Section 2(5) of Schedule 1 to the Charities Act requires the Minister to ensure that among the members of the Authority are persons who have knowledge of and expertise in relation to:

- (a) the law relating to charities,
- (b) the keeping of accounts by, and funding of, charitable organisations, and
- (c) the management of charitable organisations.

Under Section 2(6) of Schedule 1 of the Charities Act 2009, appointments to the Authority are made for a period not exceeding five years. Sections 2(7) and 2(8) of the Schedule provide

Questions - Written Answers

that a member of the Authority shall be eligible for re-appointment subject to the condition that they shall not hold office for periods the aggregate of which exceeds ten years.

The table below shows the composition of the current Board, including appointment dates.

Name	First Appointed	Reappointed	Expiry Date	Position type
Patrick Hopkins	16/10/2014		15/10/2018	Chair
Cynthia Clampett	16/10/2014		15/10/2018	Board Member
David Brady	16/10/2014	16/10/2017	15/10/2022	Board Member
Fergus Finlay	16/10/2014		15/10/2018	Board Member
Graham Richards	16/10/2014		15/10/2018	Board Member
Katie Cadden	16/10/2014		15/10/2018	Board Member
Noel Wardick	16/10/2014		15/10/2018	Board Member
Patricia Cronin	16/10/2014	16/10/2017	15/10/2022	Board Member
Sandra Chambers	16/10/2014		15/10/2018	Board Member
Tom Costello	16/10/2014	16/10/2017	15/10/2022	Board Member
Maire McMahon	16/01/2018		15/01/2023	Board Member
Niamh Cahill	16/01/2018		15/01/2023	Board Member
Ercus Stewart	16/01/2018		15/01/2023	Board Member

Library Services

1160. Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the reason a book written here must be approved and purchased by a company (details supplied) in the UK before a supply and purchase can be made by county council libraries nationally; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24612/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The provision and management of public library services is primarily a matter for each local authority in its capacity as a library authority under the Local Government Act 2001. This includes the purchase of public library book-stock which, in 2016, was subject to a national tender run by the Local Government Management Agency (LGMA) on behalf of the 31 local authorities.

The LGMA had sole responsibility for managing the tender competition and the post-tender contracting process. Four suppliers were awarded contracts on foot of the tender process and these are managed by the LGMA on behalf of local authorities.

There is no requirement in these contracts for specific books to be approved by the contract holders. In the case of a local publication or a self-publication of limited availability, there is provision for a local authority to exercise its own discretion and purchase such book-stock directly, subject to the usual public sector purchasing requirements.

Social Enterprise Sector

1161. Deputy Billy Kelleher asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the persons or bodies that are entitled to apply for funding through SECAD in view of the boundary changes (details supplied) in County Cork. [24648/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): Legislation is currently being drafted to give effect to the Government decision in December 2017 to alter

the boundary between Cork City and Cork County. Each Government Department including my own is considering the possible implications of the boundary alteration in relation to matters within their areas of responsibility, including relevant schemes or programmes.

The Social Inclusion and Communities Programme (SICAP) and the Rural Development (LEADER) Programme 2014-2020 are both under the remit of the Department of Rural and Community Development. Both Programmes are delivered locally with companies such as SECAD Partnership working as implementing partners providing services to community organisations and individuals.

With respect to SICAP, all eligible organisations should be able to access supports regardless of who is delivering the programme in their area. The final decision as to how LEADER applicants are treated in the areas affected by the boundary alteration is likely to require the agreement of the European Commission.

Cork City Council and Cork County Council are currently working with the Local Government Implementation Oversight Group (appointed by the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government) to develop and implement a Transition Plan to underpin the implementation process for the boundary alteration. I do not expect the current arrangements in respect of either SICAP or LEADER to undergo any change in the short term.

Western Development Commission Funding

1162. Deputy Charlie McConalogue asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the current and capital allocations in 2018 to the Western Development Commission. [24361/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The Western Development Commission (WDC) was established on a statutory footing in 1999 under the Western Development Commission Act, 1998. The main aim of the Commission is to promote, foster and encourage economic and social development in the Western Region, covering counties Donegal, Leitrim, Sligo, Mayo, Roscommon, Galway and Clare.

The WDC plays an important part in the Government's wider focus on regional development, which is underpinned by the National Planning Framework and also involves a deeper role in economic development by the Local Authorities and the Regional Assemblies.

Minister Ring appointed a new Board to the WDC in August 2017 and has delegated responsibility for oversight of the Commission to me. I met with the new Chair and the Acting CEO in November 2017 and in May 2018 I met with the new Board to discuss issues pertaining to financing and other areas of priority for both the WDC and the Department.

There is also on-going engagement between my Department and the WDC at executive level to deepen the Commission's involvement in the regional development agenda and to benefit from their experience.

The Exchequer allocation for the WDC in the Revised Estimates Volume for 2018 is €1.516 million in Current funding. There is no capital allocation to the WDC.

In addition, the WDC operates the Western Investment Fund (WIF), which is a revolving fund into which the Exchequer provided a total of €31.7m to the end of 2014. The fund contributes to the development of the region by investing through equity or loans in business start-up, growth-oriented small and medium enterprises and in community-based measures to encourage

enterprise development.

By the end of 2017, the WIF had invested €48.5 million in 135 enterprises and currently has approximately €21.4 million available for reinvestment in SMEs, micro-enterprises and Community and Social Enterprises in the western region.

CLÁR Programme

1163. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development if CLÁR funding will be awarded to a school (details supplied) under measure 1 safety works. [24365/18]

1164. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development if CLÁR funding will be awarded to a school (details supplied) under measure 1 safety works. [24366/18]

1165. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development if CLÁR funding will be awarded to a school (details supplied) under measure 1 safety works. [24367/18]

1166. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development if CLÁR funding will be awarded to a school (details supplied) under measure 1 car park. [24368/18]

1167. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development if CLÁR funding will be awarded to a school (details supplied) under measure 1 safety works. [24369/18]

1168. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development if CLÁR funding will be awarded to a school (details supplied) under measure 1 safety works. [24370/18]

1169. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development if CLÁR funding will be awarded to a school (details supplied) under measure 1 safety works. [24371/18]

1170. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development if CLÁR funding will be awarded to a school (details supplied) under measure 1 safety works. [24372/18]

1171. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development if CLÁR funding will be awarded to a group (details supplied) under measure 1 footpath. [24373/18]

1172. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development if CLÁR funding will be awarded to a village (details supplied) under measure 1 public lighting. [24374/18]

1173. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development if CLÁR funding will be awarded to a group (details supplied) under measure 1 public lighting. [24375/18]

1174. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development if CLÁR funding will be awarded to a group (details supplied) under measure 2 community play-

ground. [24376/18]

1175. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development if CLÁR funding will be awarded to a school (details supplied) under measure 2 school play area. [24377/18]

1176. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development if CLÁR funding will be awarded to a school (details supplied) under measure 2 school play area. [24378/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1163 to 1176, inclusive, together.

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 applications have been received in respect of all of the schools/groups 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 shortly.

Seniors Alert Scheme

1177. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the number of persons who have accessed the seniors alert scheme in counties Roscommon and Galway since 2015; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24537/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The number of approved participants under the Seniors Alert Scheme since the scheme's inception in September 2015 for the counties in question are:

Galway: 2,222

Roscommon: 446

Following the launch of a new Scheme which took effect on 1 November 2017, my Department conducted a very successful nationwide public awareness campaign aimed at older people, their extended families and friends who may not have been aware of the scheme.

The key features of the new scheme include:

- a self-declaration of limited means for eligibility;
- a person no longer has to be living alone to qualify;

- free monitoring of the alarm service for the 1st year; and
- an increase in administrative payments to Community Groups involved in rolling out the scheme.

I am pleased to say that since the launch of the new scheme, the demand has been unprecedented. Spend in 2017 amounted to almost €2.7 million, compared to the €1.8m spent in 2016. During 2017, over 12,700 applications were approved and more than 10,000 installations were completed. To the end of April 2018, over 7,500 applications were approved.

Community Services Programme

1178. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development if Pobal will be requested to provide an update on CSP funding for a group (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24554/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The Community Services Programme (CSP) supports community organisations to provide local services through a social enterprise model. Around 400 organisations are supported under the CSP, with funding provided as a contribution towards the cost of a manager and an agreed number of full-time equivalent positions.

The organisation in question submitted a business plan to Pobal during 2016 as part of the normal CSP Re-Contracting Process. The business plan did not satisfy the criteria for continued funding under the programme and the organisation was notified that it would exit the programme in June 2018. The decision was not appealed. Pobal has engaged with the organisation on several occasions since and has provided detailed feedback on the unsuccessful business plan.

I have asked Pobal to request the organisation to submit a revised business plan by August 2018. Should the business plan satisfy CSP criteria, it will be considered for funding later in the year subject to funds being available. In the meantime, the existing funding arrangements will be extended to end-March 2019 to facilitate business continuity.

Programme for Government Implementation

1179. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the status of the implementation of the Programme for A Partnership Government as it applies to his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24610/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The Government recently approved its second Programme for a Partnership Government annual report which provides a comprehensive update on progress since May 2017.

The report will be laid before the Oireachtas in the near future. It highlights progress on the specific plans put in place to tackle issues, in the short and longer terms.

My Department has provided updates on the status of the implementation of the Programme for Partnership Government in the areas of rural and regional development, job creation and broadband.

Realising our Rural Potential, the Government's Action Plan for Rural Development, was

published in January 2017. The Plan contains over 270 actions for delivery across a range of Government Departments, State agencies and other organisations over a three-year period.

The Second Progress Report, published in May 2018, shows a 93% implementation rate of the actions across Government which were due for delivery in 2017, initiatives which are supporting the economic and social progress of rural Ireland.

Further detailed information on individual programmes and commitments are provided below.

- €21.6m funding was allocated to 281 rural towns and villages across the country under the 2017 Town and Village Renewal Scheme, bringing to over 450 the total number of projects supported by the Government under this scheme since the second half of 2016.

- 900 projects to the value of €15m have been approved for funding under the CLÁR programme since it was re-launched in 2016.

- €13.6m was approved for 240 projects under the 2017 Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme to improve walking trails, greenways and other recreational amenities.

- The Greenway strategy is being developed by DTTAS and our Department will be meeting with DTTAS to discuss and provide OBs on the draft strategy shortly.

- €17m 2017 and 2018 Local Improvement Scheme for the improvement of non-public rural roads.

- Over 1,000 LEADER projects have been approved to date for funding in excess of €29 million towards enterprise development, job creation and the development of sustainable community infrastructure across rural Ireland.

- A comprehensive review of progress made by the Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce in 2017 was published this February alongside a new 2018 work programme. Key developments highlighted in the 2017 Review include a mobile phone blackspots mapping exercise; broadband officers now in every local authority, increasing the levels of communication between local authorities and industry; identification of roadside sites for masts; and increased availability of consumer information by ComReg.

- A new SICAP Programme covering the five-year period from 2018 to 2022 is now in place. Under the new Programme, Local Community Development Committees are now given the opportunity to identify their own emerging needs group to more efficiently target supports within their local area.

- A new Communities Facilities Scheme was launched in 2017. A recast RAPID programme was also launched in 2017. Each of these had funding of €2m, which was channelled through Local Community Development Committees. Following a review in 2018 these schemes were amalgamated to form the Community Enhancement Programme. This programme, with an increased budget of €4.5m, provides support to disadvantaged communities in the same way as the two previous schemes but is more flexible and easier to administer.

- Following a review, a new version of the Seniors Alert Scheme was launched in November 2017. The new Scheme includes an extension of the eligibility criteria to include elderly people who live on their own for long periods during the day and the introduction of free monitoring for the first year, following which a small charge will apply. By end December 2017, over 21,000 applications have been approved and some 18,000 installations were made. For 2018, €2.3m has been allocated for this programme, with almost 8,000 installations completed

by end April 2018.

- The Department has recently agreed a three-year contract with SIFI, which commenced on 1 June 2018, which includes a continued commitment to match philanthropic funding raised by SIFI with State funding. The Dormant Account Programme for 2018 includes an allocation for the ongoing operation of the current programme.

- In January, €3.5m was allocated under the Supports for the Community Voluntary Programme to volunteer centres in 21 counties as well as a number of national organisations, including Volunteer Ireland.

- The Atlantic Economic Corridor Taskforce is progressing areas of work relating to enterprise space, infrastructure, and communications. In March 2018 co-funding by DRCD was announced for each of the 10 City and County Councils along the corridor to support the designation of Atlantic Economic Corridor Officers who will support the work of the Taskforce.

- The Western Development Commission is represented on the Monitoring Committee for the Action Plan for Rural Development and on the Implementing Committees which oversee the delivery of the Action Plans for Jobs for the West and North-West regions.

- The Commission is also represented on the Taskforce to progress the development of an Atlantic Economic Corridor area along the western seaboard. The Western Development Commission has been a key contributor to sub-groups of this Taskforce.

- A Cross-Sectoral Working Group has been established to assist in the development of the implementation plan for the Framework Policy to support the community and voluntary sector and local development sectors. A new five-year multi-annual implementation plan for the Framework Policy on Local and Community Development will be submitted to Government for approval in Q3 2018.

Public Participation Networks

1180. **Deputy Pat Casey** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development if the request from the public participation network in each local authority to have an increase in resources has been agreed due to the volume of the vital work they perform on behalf of the community and voluntary sector; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24713/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): Since 2015, funding of up to €50,000 per annum has been made available by my Department in respect of each Public Participation Network (PPN), provided this was supplemented by a minimum of €30,000 per annum from each local authority's own resources. This funding is used to meet the cost of a PPN Resource Worker and on-going operational costs such as office accommodation and training. In addition, my Department continues to support the on-going development of the PPN network through the establishment and support of the National PPN Advisory Group, the provision of a data base and the development of a practical User Guide.

I am aware of the request for additional resources to support the work of PPNS which has been raised with my Department through the PPN Advisory Group. This will be considered in the context of the Estimates process for 2019.

Tourism Project Funding

1181. **Deputy Pat Casey** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the funding streams available to those in rural County Wicklow who wish to establish tourist accommodation such as campsites, self-catering, bed and breakfast, guest houses and so on; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24719/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): LEADER is a multi-annual programme covering the period 2014-2020. It is co-funded by the EU and funding is delivered through Local Action Groups in each of the 28 LEADER sub-regional areas around the country.

Funding under LEADER is available for a range of defined themes, which include enterprise development and job creation, social inclusion, and the environment.

The Economic Development, Enterprise Development and Job Creation theme of the LEADER Programme focuses on driving continued local economic development, including diversification of the rural economy, rural tourism and the creation of employment opportunities for the local community. In that context, support for the tourism related activities outlined by the Deputy may be considered eligible for LEADER funding.

In order for a project to be eligible for LEADER funding, it must be compatible with the actions outlined in the approved Local Development Strategy in the sub-regional area concerned, which in this case is the Wicklow Local Development Strategy, and it must comply with the Operating Rules and EU Regulations in place for the programme.

The decision to approve a project, or otherwise, is a matter for the Wicklow Local Action Group (LAG) which is the Wicklow Local Community Development Committee. Interested applicants should, in the first instance, contact the Wicklow LAG through its Implementing Partner to discuss the funding that may be available.

The Implementing Partner for the Wicklow LAG is: County Wicklow Partnership, Third Floor Avoca River House, Bridgewater Centre, Arklow, Co. Wicklow.

Contact details for County Wicklow Partnership are as follows:

- Telephone: 0402 20955
- E-mail: info@wicklowpartnership.ie.

CLÁR Programme

1182. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development if funding will be granted to a school (details supplied) that has submitted an application through the CLÁR scheme; when successful 2018 CLÁR projects will be announced; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24812/18]

1185. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development if funding will be granted to a group (details supplied) that has submitted an application through the CLÁR scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24885/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1182 and 1185 together.

CLÁR is a targeted capital investment programme for rural areas which have experienced significant levels of depopulation.

I launched the 2018 CLÁR programme on 15th March last, with an indicative allocation of €5 million for qualifying projects under the following measures:

Measure 1: Support for Schools/Community Safety Measures

Measure 2: Play Areas/Multi-Use Games Areas

Measure 3: First Response Support Measure

The closing date for CLÁR 2018 was 30th April and more than 400 applications were received in total by my Department.

No application appears to have been received in respect of either of the groups referred to by the Deputy. However, if the Deputy wishes to provide me with further information, I will look further into the matter.

My officials are currently assessing all applications submitted under the 2018 CLÁR programme and I hope to be in a position to announce the successful projects shortly.

CLÁR Programme

1183. Deputy Eamon Scanlon asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development if funding will be granted to a club (details supplied) that has submitted an application through the CLÁR scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24882/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): CLÁR is a targeted capital investment programme for rural areas which have experienced significant levels of depopulation.

I launched the 2018 CLÁR programme on the 15th March last, with an indicative allocation of €5 million for qualifying projects under the following measures:

Measure 1: Support for Schools/Community Safety Measures

Measure 2: Play Areas/Multi-Use Games Areas

Measure 3: First Response Support Measure

The closing date for CLÁR 2018 was 30th April and more than 400 applications have been received. I can confirm that an application in respect of the club referred to by the Deputy was received under Measure 1, but no application was received under Measure 2.

My officials are currently assessing all applications submitted under the 2018 CLÁR programme and I hope to be in a position to announce the successful projects shortly.

CLÁR Programme

1184. Deputy Eamon Scanlon asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development if funding will be granted to an organisation (details supplied) that has submitted an application through the CLÁR scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24884/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): CLÁR is a targeted capital investment programme for rural areas which have experienced significant levels of depopulation.

I launched the 2018 CLÁR programme on the 15th March last, with an indicative allocation of €5 million for qualifying projects under the following measures:

Measure 1: Support for Schools/Community Safety Measures

Measure 2: Play Areas/Multi-Use Games Areas

Measure 3: First Response Support Measure

The closing date for CLÁR 2018 was 30th April and more than 400 applications have been received. I can confirm that an application in respect of the organisation referred to by the Deputy was received.

My officials are currently assessing all applications submitted under the 2018 CLÁR programme and I hope to be in a position to announce the successful projects shortly.

Question No. 1185 answered with Question No. 1182.

Community Services Programme

1186. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the amount of the wage grant per participant under the community services programme in each of the years since 2009; the amount of the minimum wage in each year including employers PRSI costs; the amount to be made up by the employers on each scheme for each full-time participant on the scheme in each year in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25041/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The Community Services Programme (CSP) supports around 400 community organisations to provide local services through a social enterprise model. CSP funding is provided as a fixed annual co-funding contribution to the cost of a manager and an agreed number of full-time equivalent (FTE) positions, with €32,000 per annum provided for a manager and €19,033 per annum for each FTE position.

The CSP contribution is based on a 39-hour working week. It is not aligned to the national minimum wage, rather it is a fixed annual contribution that must be co-funded by the organisation concerned from other sources, for example, from income received from the public use of their facilities and services.

The following table sets out the requested information.

	Minimum wage per annum	CSP FTE Contribution incl. 8.5% ER PRSI	CSP Manager Contribution incl. 10.75% ER PRSI	Difference between FTE contribution and min. wage cost	Difference between Manager contribution and min. wage cost
2009	€19,033	€19,033	€33,831	€0	€14,798
2010	€16,833	€19,033	€32,000	€2,200	€15,167

	Minimum wage per annum	CSP FTE Contribution incl. 8.5% ER PRSI	CSP Manager Contribution incl. 10.75% ER PRSI	Difference between FTE contribution and min. wage cost	Difference between Manager contribution and min. wage cost
2011	€17,933	€19,033	€32,000	€1,100	€14,067
2012	€19,033	€19,033	€32,000	€0	€12,967
2013	€19,033	€19,033	€32,000	€0	€12,967
2014	€19,033	€19,033	€32,000	€0	€12,967
2015	€20,133	€19,033	€32,000	-€1,100	€11,867
2016	€20,133	€19,033	€32,000	-€1,100	€11,867
2017	€20,353	€19,033	€32,000	-€1,320	€11,647
2018	€21,014	€19,033	€32,000	-€1,981	€10,986

Community Services Programme

1187. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development his views on whether certain community services companies have limited revenue generating ability due to their location and the type of vital service they are providing; the steps he plans to take to assist these companies; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25042/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The Community Services Programme (CSP) supports around 400 community organisations to provide local services through a social enterprise model. CSP funding is provided as a fixed annual co-funding contribution to the cost of a manager and an agreed number of full-time equivalent positions, with €32,000 per annum provided for a manager and €19,033 per annum for each full-time equivalent (FTE) position.

The CSP contribution is required to be co-funded by supported organisations from other sources, for example, from income received from the public use of their facilities and services. However, their capacity to generate the required co-funding very much depends on the nature and scale of the organisation or the service provided.

My Department will commence a review of the CSP later this year. The review will consider, among other things, how the programme fits with overall Government priorities as well as my Department's other community programmes and its policy objectives. Importantly, it will also examine the existing funding structure as well as options for matching supports and programme requirements to the nature and scale of the organisations and services being supported by the programme.

Community Services Programme

1188. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development his plans to increase the support funding for a community services company (details supplied) in 2018 and 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25043/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The Community Services Programme (CSP) supports around 400 community organisations to provide local services through a social enterprise model. CSP funding is provided as a fixed annual

co-funding contribution to the cost of a manager and an agreed number of full-time equivalent positions, with €32,000 per annum provided for a manager and €19,033 per annum for each full-time equivalent (FTE) position.

The centre in question currently receives a CSP contribution towards one manager and 10 FTEs. It is also approved for transition funding for the three years 2016 to 2018 to help it meet the increased cost in the minimum wage in previous years, and has received one-to-one supports and training in 2017 and 2018 to help it develop its financial sustainability in the longer-term. There are no plans to provide additional support funding to the centre, or other CSP funded organisations, at this time.

That said, my Department will commence a review of the CSP later this year. The review will consider, among other things, how the programme fits with overall Government priorities as well as my Department's other community programmes and policy objectives. Importantly, it will also examine the existing funding structure as well as options for matching supports and programme requirements to the nature and scale of the organisations and services being supported by the programme.

Departmental Expenditure

1189. Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the amount of capital expenditure in 2018 to date by his Department by subhead; the amount of capital provided for in the estimates by subhead; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25078/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The following table sets out the capital expenditure to the end of May 2018 in respect of my Department.

	Allocation - €000	Capital Exchequer Spend - €000	Capital Carryover - €000	TOTAL - €000
A - RURAL DEVELOPMENT & REGIONAL AFFAIRS				
A.3 - DORMANT ACCOUNT MEASURES	2,006	0		0
A.5 - NATIONAL RURAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEMES	15,383*	402	581	983
A.6 - LEADER - RURAL ECONOMY SUB PROGRAMME	35,000*	2,654	3,165	5,819

Questions - Written Answers

	Allocation - €000	Capital Exchequer Spend - €000	Capital Carryover - €000	TOTAL - €000
A.8 - TOWN AND VIL-LAGE RE-GENERA-TION	15,000	3,082		3,082
A.9 - RURAL BROAD-BAND, RE-GIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOP-MENT	600	11		11
A.10 - LO-CAL IM-PROVEMENT SCHEMES	10,000	0		0
B - COMMU-NITY DEVEL-OPMENT				
B.6 - RAPID	3,767	5		5
B.8 - PRO-GRAMME FOR PEACE AND RECON-CILIATION	700	0		0
B.10 - LI-BRARY DEVELOP-MENT AND ARCHIVE SERVICE	2,750	0		0
B.11 - COM-MUNITY FACILITIES FUND	2,000	0		0

* The Department vote also contains a capital carryover elements of €7.7 million which is divided between A5 National Rural Development Schemes (€2.7 million) and A6 Leader (€5 million).

I will continue to review capital expenditure across the Department to year end with a view to maximising the funding made available by the Oireachtas for rural and community development in Ireland.

Leader Programmes Expenditure

1190. Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the value of all projects approved by each LAG under the Leader programme; the amount ex-

pended on projects by each LAG under the programme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25079/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): LEADER is a multi-annual EU co-funded programme to support rural development. Ireland has an allocation of €250 million under the programme over the period 2014-2020, including both national and EU funding. The programme is administered by Local Action Groups (LAGs) which deliver funding in accordance with Local Development Strategies that have been agreed for each LAG area.

As of 4th June 2018, 1,020 projects with a value of over €29.2 million had been approved for LEADER funding by the LAGs. A further 325 projects requesting over €19 million in funding were at various stages in the approvals process. This funding will be drawn down as projects start to incur expenditure and submit payment claims.

Project payments amounting to €2,605,663 were made to June 4th 2018. A breakdown of approvals and project expenditure by LAG is provided on Table 1 below.

While the pace of approvals varies between Local Action Groups, I am confident that the progress now being made by the LAGs in approving projects, along with the administrative improvements which my Department introduced last year, will result in a continued increase in project approvals and payments under the LEADER programme over the coming months.

Table 1

Local Action Group	No of Projects Approved	Value of Projects Approved	No of Project Claims Paid	Value of Project Claims Paid
Carlow	15	€1,051,131	6	€299,930.07
Cavan	15	€834,354	1	€3,401.23
Clare	69	€1,331,079	12	€104,790.12
Cork North	29	€1,076,479	1	€51,496.78
Cork South	14	€458,698	0	€0.00
Cork West	17	€619,659	0	€0.00
Donegal	76	€2,678,488	19	€281,248.10
Dublin Rural	27	€708,830	4	€59,457.06
Galway East	3	€29,077	0	€0.00
Galway West	18	€295,446	0	€0.00
Kerry	133	€2,354,835	6	€167,531.93
Kildare	12	€346,781	0	€0.00
Kilkenny	40	€1,046,263	9	€102,718.16
Laois	33	€653,387	2	€24,712.50
Leitrim	21	€552,271	1	€74,834.23
Limerick	57	€2,194,432	0	€0.00
Longford	27	€503,756	0	€0.00
Louth	26	€479,110	5	€37,624.25
Mayo	56	€1,862,195	16	€203,502.42
Meath	12	€337,394	3	€16,497.70
Monaghan	20	€1,022,262	3	€136,507.90
Offaly	52	€1,052,654	25	€269,254.55
Roscommon	14	€404,654	0	€0.00

Local Action Group	No of Projects Approved	Value of Projects Approved	No of Project Claims Paid	Value of Project Claims Paid
Sligo	40	€1,250,999	8	€265,231.08
Tipperary	66	€1,697,029	3	€88,959.94
Waterford	33	€2,210,000	7	€342,653.63
Westmeath	31	€473,460	3	€11,643.66
Wexford	47	€1,441,057	3	€63,667.86
Wicklow	17	€313,274	0	€0.00
Grand Total	1,020	€29,279,057	137	€2,605,663.17

Departmental Funding

1191. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the amount of capital carried over from 2017 to 2018; the amount of same spent to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25080/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The total amount of capital carried forward from 2017 to 2018 in respect of my Department amounted to €7.7m; comprised of €5m in Leader funding and €2.7m in National Rural Development Schemes.

At the end of May a total of €3.746m has been expended - €3.165m Leader and €0.581m under National Rural Development Schemes. I anticipate that the balance of the carryover will be drawn down in the coming months.

Local Authority Finances

1192. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the amount of the €28 million pre-paid to local authorities at the end of 2016 that has not been expended to date by local authority; the steps he plans to take to ensure these funds are either spent or returned to his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25081/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): As part of the Government's programme to support rural development, a number of initiatives including CLÁR, the Rural Recreation Scheme, the Town and Village Renewal Scheme, and REDZ (Rural Economic Development Zones) were launched during 2016. In general, these initiatives were implemented through the Local Authorities.

Payments of approximately €28 million were made to the Local Authorities in 2016 to deliver these schemes. All funding was provided on the basis of sanction received from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and on foot of Funding Agreements signed with the Local Authorities.

The table below outlines the amount of funding provided to each Local Authority by programme in 2016 and the amounts unspent as reported to the end of April 2018. It should be noted that not all Local Authorities applied for, or were eligible for, every scheme.

Almost 88% of all funding allocated to the Local Authorities has been spent, with expenditure on the CLAR programme and the Town and Village Renewal scheme in excess of 90%. The Department is continuing to work closely with all relevant Local Authorities to ensure that all remaining unspent funding is utilised in accordance with the original project proposals.

County	Total amount disbursed REDZ 2016	REDZ 2016 Total Department REDZ Grant unspent by LA at the 30th April 2018	Total amount paid Town and Village Renewal Scheme 2016	Town & Village Total Department Grant unspent by LA at the 30th April 2018
Carlow	€200,000.00	€72,800.00	€380,000.00	€0.00
Cavan	€200,000.00	€87,500.00	€380,000.00	€0.00
Clare	€200,000.00	€0.00	€380,000.00	€0.00
Cork	€248,000.00	€41,006.00	€380,000.00	€0.00
Donegal	€298,000.00	€0.00	€380,000.00	€343,691.00
Dublin FINGAL DLR	€0.00	€0.00	€380,000.00	€67,796.00
Galway	€100,000.00	€44,944.00	€380,000.00	€18,214.00
Kerry	€150,195.00	€0.00	€380,000.00	€0.00
Kildare	€100,000.00	€14,002.00	€380,000.00	€124,986.00
Kilkenny	€200,000.00	€0.00	€380,000.00	€0.00
Laois	€200,000.00	€8,093.00	€380,000.00	€45,621.00
Leitrim	€300,000.00	€58,341.00	€380,000.00	€0.00
Limerick	€300,000.00	€100,000.00	€380,000.00	€0.00
Longford	€350,000.00	€19,412.00	€380,000.00	€0.00
Louth	€100,000.00	€82,856.00	€380,000.00	€0.00
Mayo	€150,000.00	€5,000.00	€380,000.00	€0.00
Meath	€200,000.00	€0.00	€380,000.00	€42,730.00
Monaghan	€290,000.00	€0.00	€380,000.00	€77.00
Offaly	€414,870.00	€156,070.00	€380,000.00	€0.00
Roscommon	€100,000.00	€0.00	€380,000.00	€59,668.00
Sligo	€800,000.00	€140,000.00	€380,000.00	€0.00
Tipperary	€699,221.00	€267,643.00	€380,000.00	€2,493.00
Waterford	€100,000.00	€0.00	€380,000.00	€0.00
Westmeath	€192,000.00	€56,023.00	€380,000.00	€60,000.00
Wexford	€100,000.00	€0.00	€380,000.00	€26,654.00
Wicklow	€150,556.00	€126,300.00	€380,000.00	€20,970.00
Total	€6,142,842.00	€1,279,990.00	€9,880,000.00	€812,900.00
County	Total amount disbursed CLAR 2016 Scheme	Total Department Grant unspent by LA at the 31 Mar 2018 CLÁR (total of 3 measures) 30th April 2018	Total amount disbursed Rural Recreation Scheme Local Authorities 2016	Rural Rec Total Department Grant unspent by LA at the 30th April 2018
Carlow	€80,000.00	€0.00	€67,500.00	€30,365.95
Cavan	€498,184.00	€61,102.11	€45,567.00	€0.00
Clare	€284,000.00	€0.00	€255,625.20	€0.00
Cork	€562,222.40	€87,387.63	€417,815.15	€32,964.00
Donegal	€878,632.54	€69,227.30	€67,991.00	€0.00

County	Total amount disbursed REDZ 2016	REDZ 2016 Total Department REDZ Grant unspent by LA at the 30th April 2018	Total amount paid Town and Village Renewal Scheme 2016	Town & Village Total Department Grant unspent by LA at the 30th April 2018
Dublin FINGAL DLR	€0.00	€0.00	€33,666.94	€0.00
Galway	€392,000.00	€28,174.00	€248,950.00	€96,279.37
Kerry	€744,964.00	€19,444.00	€288,000.00	€41,359.00
Kildare	€0.00	€0.00	€0.00	€0.00
Kilkenny	€223,000.00	€7,670.00	€0.00	€0.00
Laois	€148,900.00	€400.00	€256,000.00	€37,440.00
Leitrim	€274,800.00	€0.00	€480,000.00	€401,354.10
Limerick	€235,000.00	€0.00	€291,250.00	€0.00
Longford	€237,560.00	€5,177.89	€190,000.00	€0.00
Louth	€173,520.00	€10,386.50	€0.00	€0.00
Mayo	€976,869.00	€49,999.40	€455,000.00	€78,143.50
Meath	€127,600.00	€3,235.00	€50,000.00	€0.00
Monaghan	€356,440.00	€4,763.00	€273,014.00	€5,692.41
Offaly	€123,398.00	€0.00	€172,959.00	€161,816.00
Roscommon	€406,497.40	€54,055.77	€0.00	€0.00
Sligo	€598,400.00	€40,000.00	€42,562.50	€0.00
Tipperary	€371,000.00	€13,848.40	€85,208.00	€11,751.00
Waterford	€261,600.00	€21,149.59	€0.00	€0.00
Westmeath	€214,280.00	€44,000.78	€219,590.00	€0.00
Wexford	€0.00	€0.00	€189,455.00	€0.00
Wicklow	€70,000.00	€0.00	€0.00	€0.00
Total	€8,238,867.34	€520,021.37	€4,130,153.79	€897,165.33

Local Improvement Scheme Applications

1193. Deputy Sean Sherlock asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development if a special application by a person (details supplied) in respect of a person will be accepted. [25121/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The case which the Deputy refers to would be entirely a matter for consideration by the relevant Local Authority under the Local Improvement Scheme (LIS). LIS is a programme for improvement works on small private/non-public roads and is currently funded by my Department and delivered through the Local Authorities.

I launched the 2018 LIS programme in February this year with an allocation of €10 million distributed across the Local Authorities. Under the scheme, it is the responsibility of the relevant Local Authority to select and prioritise the road projects that will receive LIS funding in line with the scheme criteria. The list of projects which the Local Authorities plan to undertake this year have now been published on the Rural Development pages of my Department's website.

Should additional funding become available for the scheme later this year, it will again be up to the Local Authorities to prioritise projects under any additional allocation they may receive. Neither I nor my Department have any input into the Local Authorities' selection process.

Commencement of Legislation

1194. Deputy Mattie McGrath asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the sections and parts of all legislation brought forward by his Department in each of the past four years that have yet to be commenced; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25184/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The Department of Rural and Community Development was established on the 19th of July 2017.

Since that date my Department has not brought forward any legislation that has yet to be commenced.

Local Authority Funding

1195. Deputy Michael Healy-Rae asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the additional funding available to a group (details supplied) to complete a process; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25553/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): I launched the Community Enhancement Programme (CEP) last month. The programme provides funding to enhance facilities for disadvantaged communities. The programme replaces and builds on two existing schemes (Communities Facilities Scheme and the RAPID). Combining these schemes will make for a more flexible, streamlined and targeted approach to providing funding to those communities most in need, while reducing the level of administration involved.

I have provided funding under this programme to each Local Authority area, taking into account levels of disadvantage and the overall population in each area. Kerry will receive €142,409, which is an increase on the 2017 combined allocation (from CFS and RAPID) of €129,000. Although some of the available funding is ring-fenced to provide small capital grants of €1,000 or less, the programme can, where appropriate, fund or partially fund larger scale capital projects.

The group referenced may be eligible for funding under this programme. Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs) will be advertising for applications for funding in the coming weeks and final decisions regarding funding allocations will be made by the LCDCs in each area.

Departmental Funding

1196. Deputy Jonathan O'Brien asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development his Department's capital allocation in each of the years 2019 to 2023; and the areas to which funds will be allocated in each of those years. [25577/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The Revised Estimates 2018 in respect of my Department set out a capital allocation of €88m in respect of

Questions - Written Answers

my Department in 2018, supplemented by €7.7m in capital carryover from 2017.

The following table sets out programme capital expenditure in respect of 2018.

2018 Programme Allocation	Allocation 000
A - RURAL DEVELOPMENT & REGIONAL AFFAIRS	
A.3 - DORMANT ACCOUNT MEASURES	2,006
A.5 - NATIONAL RURAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEMES	15,383
A.6 - LEADER - RURAL ECONOMY SUB PROGRAMME	35,000
A.8 - TOWN AND VILLAGE REGENERATION	15,000
A.9 - RURAL BROADBAND, REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	600
A.10 - LOCAL IMPROVEMENT SCHEMES	10,000
B - COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT	
B.6 - RAPID	3,767
B.8 - PROGRAMME FOR PEACE AND RECONCILIATION	700
B.10 - LIBRARY DEVELOPMENT AND ARCHIVE SERVICE	2,750
B.11 - COMMUNITY FACILITIES FUND	2,000

Sectorial allocations in respect of 2019 and subsequent years will fall to be considered as part of the annual estimates process.

As recently announced, a new Rural Regeneration and Development Fund will also be established under my Department as part of Project Ireland 2040. This fund will invest an additional €1 billion in strengthening rural economies and communities over the next 10 years.

Additional investments under the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund will commence in 2019 and will ramp up incrementally over the first 4 years before reaching a steady level of investment. This will allow both increased activity under existing initiatives as well as the introduction of new investment initiatives under the Fund to be supported during this period.

My Department's Capital allocation, to 2022, will be as follows: (this shows a doubling of investment between now and 2022):

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022**
Total Capital Allocation (m)	88*	141	150	152	175
* 2018 + €7.7m Capital Carryover ** 2023 the Department's capital allocation in 2023 will be determined as part of the annual estimates process					

My Department is currently finalising arrangements for the detailed operation of the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund, and I will announce the details in late June following consultation with relevant Government colleagues.

School Meals Programme

1197. Deputy Róisín Shortall asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Pro-

tection further to Parliamentary Question No. 1830 of 16 January 2018, the reason funding from the schools meals programme has not been provided to a school (details supplied); and if she will ensure that this commences from September 2018. [24465/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The school meals programme provides funding towards the provision of food to some 1,580 schools and organisations benefitting 250,000 children at a total cost of €54 million in 2018 representing an increase of €6.5 million over the previous year. The objective of the scheme is to provide regular, nutritious food to children who are unable, due to lack of good quality food, to take full advantage of the education provided to them. The programme is an important component of policies to encourage school attendance and extra educational achievement.

The scheme provides funding for a breakfast for all children and lunch for up to 90% of children in DEIS schools for the entire school year from September to June. For the first time in many years, breakfasts are also now available to some schools outside DEIS. Schools are notified in writing of their allocation at the beginning of the academic year.

The school referred to by the Deputy, which is a DEIS school, is currently being funded for a breakfast for all children and a lunch for up to 90% of children based on the enrolment figure provided by the Department of Education and Skills.

Schools and organisations must reapply for funding in advance of each school year and are required to submit detailed records. These records include one complete month's receipts for the previous funding year. The school should submit an application for September 2018 as soon as possible.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Rent Supplement Scheme Administration

1198. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the steps that a tenant can take if a landlord refuses to sign supplementary rent forms, SWA RS1; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [24722/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Rent supplement plays a vital role in housing families and individuals, with the scheme supporting approximately 30,000 recipients for which the Government has provided €180 million for in 2018.

Under the legislative provisions governing rent supplement the Department's sole relationship is with the tenant; the tenant makes the application to the department and the payment is made directly to the tenant for their accommodation needs. There is no contractual relationship between the landlord and the Department. The tenant's engagement with the Department usually takes place after they have reached an agreement with their landlord regarding their tenancy arrangement. If a landlord refuses to complete the required section of the SWA RS1, which provides the basis for proving the existence of a tenancy, rent supplement cannot be awarded.

If a landlord is considered to be acting discriminatorily by a tenant/ prospective tenant, e.g. refusing to sign a SWA RS1 where a tenancy had been nominally agreed / or already in place, s/he does have recourse to remedy under the Equal Status Acts 2000–2015. Under this Act, a person cannot be discriminated against by a landlord on the basis that they are in receipt of rent supplement; the housing assistance payment scheme; or any other social welfare payment. For further information, including access to support services for tenants who feel they have been

discriminated against due to their dependence on rent supplement for their housing needs, the Deputy is directed to the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission - www.ihrec.ie .

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

School Meals Programme

1199. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if funding under the school meals local projects scheme for a school (details supplied) will be increased proportionally in view of its projected increase in enrolment for the next school term; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [24887/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The school meals programme provides funding towards the provision of food to some 1,580 schools and organisations benefitting 250,000 children at a total cost of €54 million in 2018 representing an increase of €6.5 million over the previous year. The objective of the scheme is to provide regular, nutritious food to children who are unable, due to lack of good quality food, to take full advantage of the education provided to them. The programme is an important component of policies to encourage school attendance and extra educational achievement.

Funding is based on a rate of payment per meal, per child, per day. Schools are notified on the application form that funding is limited to the previous year's enrolment figure. However, if the school indicates they will be taking in additional pupils for the upcoming year, consideration can be given to increase funding above the 2017/2018 enrolment figure, subject to supporting documentation from the Department of Education and Skills (DES) confirming the projected enrolment for 2018/2019.

The school should submit an application for the coming academic year as soon as possible together with supporting documentation from DES confirming the projected enrolment for 2018/2019.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Disability Activation Projects

1200. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the supports provided by her Department for those in employment that have intellectual disabilities and may need additional supports to remain in the workplace; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [24979/18]

1245. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if the employability services used by those seeking employment can also be utilised by a person that is already in employment but due to their intellectual disabilities requires some additional supports to remain in that employment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [24978/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): It is proposed to take questions 1200 & 1245 together.

My Department provides a range of work related supports for people with disabilities and their employers. Participation in such schemes are of course voluntary in nature.

These supports include both the DEASP's Intreo service and also the EmployAbility service, which is a nationwide service that provides employment support for people with a health condition, injury, illness or disability and a recruitment advice service for the business community to support such jobseekers. The overall objective of the service is to increase the numbers of people with disabilities participating in employment in the open labour market by helping the client of the service obtain and maintain employment (by supporting them in the workplace for up to 18 months).

The services are primarily designed for people with disabilities who are currently not in employment but who would like to participate in the open labour market rather than persons who are already in employment.

My Department also provides a range of grants under the reasonable accommodation fund, which comprises employment supports to assist people with disabilities to access and retain employment. These include the employee retention grant scheme; and the workplace equipment adaptation grant. The Employee Retention Grant Scheme is open to all companies in the private sector. Funding is available to support the retention of any existing employee, at any level and occupation within the company, who acquires an illness, condition or impairment which impacts on his/her current ability to do his/her job. Further information and details of how to apply for workplace support grants are available on the Department's website at

<https://www.welfare.ie/en/Pages/Workplace-Supports-Contact-List.aspx>.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Birth Certificates

1201. Deputy Mattie McGrath asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if it is possible for a birth certificate to record two persons of the same sex or gender as the parents of a child produced using donor assisted human reproduction techniques in circumstances in which the gamete donation is from a third party; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25187/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The current legislation governing registration of births provides only for the registration of a mother's details and a father's details. It is not possible, at present, to register the details of a birth using the term "parent". This is provided for in section 99 of the Children and Family Relationships Act 2015, which is yet to be commenced.

In the meantime, births should continue to be registered under the current procedures and then re-registered (to have the second parent registered as "parent") once the amending legislation has come into effect. The relevant provisions for re-registration are contained in section 95 of the Children and Family Relationships Act 2015, which amends civil registration legislation relating to registration of births, and which also is yet to be commenced.

A number of amendments to civil registration legislation, including those referred to above, remain to be commenced pending the roll-out of training to staff of the Civil Registration Service who are employees of the HSE. The General Register Office is in a position to begin provision of training as soon as the HSE notifies it of the dates and venues.

Direct Provision Payments

1202. Deputy Catherine Connolly asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection her plans to increase direct provision payments for adults and children in line with the supplementary welfare allowance; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25266/18]

1203. Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the estimated full year cost of doubling the payments made to those that are resident in direct provision. [25706/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1202 and 1203 together.

Protection seekers are offered accommodation under the system of direct provision operated by the Reception & Integration Agency (RIA) of the Department of Justice and Equality. Those who accept direct provision are provided with accommodation, food and health services together with other facilities and services designed to ensure their needs are met while seeking the protection of the State. All costs for this are borne by the State.

The direct provision allowance (DPA) is a non-statutory payment paid by my Department on behalf of the Department of Justice and Equality to protection applicants living in the direct provision system. The weekly rate of DPA for children and adults is €21.60. The Government has provided over €5.6 million for the allowance in 2018.

There are approximately 3,700 adults and 1,600 children residing in the system of direct provision in respect of whom the direct provision allowance is being paid. The additional full-year cost, based on the current numbers, of doubling the weekly rate to €43.20 per week would cost some €5.95 million.

The supplementary welfare allowance (SWA) scheme provides assistance to eligible people in the State whose means are insufficient to meet their needs and those of their dependants and who do not qualify for payment under other State schemes. It is payable at the rate of €196 per week, with increases for qualified adults and children paid at the rates of €131.40 and €31.80 respectively. As protection seekers are provided with accommodation, food and other services, which recipients of SWA do not receive, it would not be appropriate to increase the rate of DPA in line with SWA. The rate of DPA for adults was increased from €19.10 to €21.60 in August 2017 while the rate for children increased from €9.60 to €15.60 in January 2016 and to €21.60 in August 2017.

Any further increases to the rate of direct provision allowance would have to be approved by Government and considered in a budgetary context.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputies.

Paternity Benefit Applications

1204. Deputy John Brady asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of persons that have used class S PRSI contributions to qualify for maternity benefit, invalidity benefit and treatment benefit since they were introduced. [24266/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): It is not possible to provide the information requested in respect of all of these schemes as this level of detail is not required to qualify for the benefits. Qualification is based on having the required number of contributions paid or credited and there is generally no requirement to record the specific PRSI class giving rise to qualification.

However, detail on the number of people that have used Class S PRSI contributions to qualify for paternity benefit, since it was introduced in September 2016 can be provided and is shown here

YEAR	RECIPIENTS
2018 (To 03/06/2018)	779
2017	2,014
2016	404

The invalidity pension scheme was extended to the self-employed from 1 December 2017, with legislation enacted to include self-employed PRSI contributions in the reckonable category for this pension. As a result, invalidity pension claims can be awarded based on employed, self-employed or a combination of both contribution types and it is not necessary to keep a record of the contribution type used to qualify. Accordingly, the requested information is not available.

Similarly, it is not possible to identify treatment benefit claims from the self-employed without significant analysis and development work, as the Department does not record information in respect of claims paid under separate PRSI classes. However, the increase in claim numbers is a good indicator of the interest in these benefits from self-employed and employed contributors. Overall, 649,500 claims have been processed and paid in the eight months from November 2017 to May 2018, an increase of 388,900 claims on the same period a year ago.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Benefit Applications

1205. Deputy Pat Breen asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when a decision will issue to a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [24279/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Carer's benefit (CARB) is a payment made to insured people who leave the workforce to care for a person(s) in need of full-time care and attention.

An application for CARB was received from the person concerned on 6 March 2018.

The application was awarded to the person concerned on 6 June 2018 and the first payment will issue to her nominated post office on 14 June 2018.

Arrears of allowance due from 7 June 2018 to 13 June 2018 will also issue.

The person concerned was notified on 6 June 2018 of this decision, the reason for it and of her right of review and appeal.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Disability Allowance Applications

1206. Deputy Robert Troy asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if a disability allowance payment will issue to a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [24290/18]

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 the above named person on 18 April 2018. No decision has been made on the entitlement of the person concerned to date.

If this lady wishes to have her DA application backdated she may do so in writing, clearly stating the grounds for not having made the application at the earlier date and the matter will be considered by a deciding officer.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Employment Support Services

1207. Deputy John Brady asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if those aged over 62 years of age are required to engage in job activation schemes; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [24292/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): As of 1 January 2014, jobseekers aged up to 61 must comply with mandatory activation measures when requested to do so. At age 62, jobseekers are not subject to mandatory activation measures, but may avail of employment supports voluntarily.

Jobseekers who are already engaged in activation prior to age 62 are expected to complete the process if they turn 62 while in activation.

Free Travel Scheme

1208. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of the €10 million allocated to the free travel scheme as outlined in budget 2018; the amount of the €10 million allocation that has been spent; the way in which the funds have been spent; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [24316/18]

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. The free travel scheme is available to all people aged over 66 living permanently in the State. Applicants who are under age 66 must be in receipt of a qualifying payment in order to qualify for the scheme and permanently living in the State.

There are currently 914,073 customers in receipt of Free Travel.

In making the extra provision for free travel in Budget 2018, the Government was anxious to broaden the free travel scheme and make it more accessible to those in rural Ireland in particular. We wanted to see more private commercial operators joining the scheme for the first time, existing participants adding more routes and operators returning to the scheme where they had previously withdrawn.

Additionally, private operators are compensated directly by the Department, to a level which

equates to approximately 70% of the estimated average fare charged by these operators to full fare paying passengers. In order to ensure that private commercial bus operators are being fairly compensated the Department requests relevant companies to conduct passenger surveys. Based on survey results the Department makes adjustments to payments to private operators to ensure adequate compensation is provided, and the additional Budgetary allocation facilitates that.

Finally, the additional Budgetary provision also allowed for the arrangements for Bus Éireann - Expressway to be brought into line with those of other commercial operators participating in the scheme. The discount applied on free travel payments to Bus Éireann- Expressway was reduced from 40% to 30%, putting Bus Éireann - Expressway on an equal footing with other commercial operators participating in the free travel scheme.

A total of €35 million was spent on the free travel scheme up to the end of May 2018.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

School Meals Programme

1209. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of the €1.7 million allocated to school meals for newly designated DEIS schools as outlined in budget 2018; the amount of the €1.7 million allocation that has been spent; the way in which the funds have been spent; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [24317/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The school meals programme provides funding towards the provision of food to some 1,580 schools and organisations benefitting 250,000 children at a total cost of €54 million in 2018 representing an increase of €6.5 million over the previous year. €1.7 million will be allocated to provide supports under the school meals programme to additional schools from September 2018.

The Department was a member of the Inter-Departmental Advisory Group for the Review of the DEIS Programme undertaken by the Department of Education and Skills (DES), following which *DEIS Plan 2017* was published in February 2017. The Plan sets out targets and actions aimed at improving the educational outcome for pupils at greatest risk of not reaching their full potential by virtue of their socio-economic circumstances.

Some 240 additional schools, including DEIS and non-DEIS schools, were identified to receive support under the school meals scheme from September 2017 in consultation with DES, which has developed a more robust and responsive framework for assessing individual schools levels of concentrated disadvantage as part of this process. Some 200 schools joined the scheme during the 2017/2018 academic year. This ensured that the scheme continued to target those children most in need of this support.

The Department is currently liaising with DES with a view to including additional schools in the school meals scheme from September 2018 and when details are available individual schools will be contacted and invited to participate in the scheme.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Youth Employment Initiative

1210. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of the €1 million allocated to youth employment support schemes as outlined in budget 2018; the amount of the €1 million allocation that has been spent; the way in which the funds have been spent; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [24318/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The new Youth Employment Support Scheme (YESS) was announced as part of Budget 2018.

The scheme will be targeted at young people aged 18 to 24 who are long-term unemployed or who face barriers to employment. It aims to provide them with the opportunity to learn basic work and social skills in a supportive environment while on a work placement. The scheme will provide a supportive structure, including case worker support for both Placement Hosts and jobseekers.

The scheme will complement and sit alongside other opportunities developed by the Department of Education and Skills, such as the new Career Traineeships and Apprenticeships, and will broaden the choice available to young people.

A budget of €1 million has been allocated to the YEES for the remainder of 2018.

I trust that this clarifies that matter for the Deputy.

Rural Social Scheme Expenditure

1211. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of the €1.2 million allocated to the rural social scheme as outlined in budget 2018; the amount of the €1.2 million allocation that has been spent; the number of new places on that have been opened up; the way in which the funds have been spent; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [24319/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Deputies on all sides of the House are fully aware of the positive benefits derived from schemes like the Rural Social Scheme (RSS). In recognition of the crucial work undertaken in rural communities under the scheme, and as part of the social welfare budget package for 2018, I announced an increase in the weekly rate of payment for participants from March together with an additional 250 places. Taking into account the 500 additional places already allocated as part of the social welfare Budget 2017, this brings the total number of RSS places to 3,350, nearly 30% of an increase in the last two years.

In March 2018, the 250 additional places were allocated to the Implementing Bodies (IBs), who deliver the scheme on behalf of the Department taking a number of factors into consideration including the number of places already allocated, the demand for places in particular areas, work opportunities available within communities and the numbers of farmers and fishermen in receipt of income support. As of 8th June 2018, there were 2,981 places filled and my Department continue to work closely with the IBs to ensure all places are filled.

The 2018 budget provision for RSS is €51.04m which is an increase of €6.6m on the 2017 outturn on the scheme. Up to the end of May 2018, the total expenditure on the scheme has been €21.9m. Recent budgets have been forward looking, allocating limited resources in a prudent way, to make sure that everyone benefits from the recovery.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Domiciliary Care Allowance Applications

1212. Deputy Michael McGrath asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if a person (details supplied) in County Cork is entitled to receive a domiciliary care allowance backdated to the date of their child's diagnosis. [24364/18]

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 person on the 19th September 2014. The application was not allowed as the child was not considered to satisfy the qualifying conditions for the allowance. A letter issued on 11th February 2015 advising of the decision and the right of appeal, no appeal was received.

A further application for DCA was received on the 27th October 2016 and this application was approved and awarded from 1st November 2016. DCA is payable from the month following receipt of the application unless good cause is shown for the delay in applying. Where good cause is shown, it can be backdated by a maximum of six months. When assessing the application the deciding officer was not satisfied that the person concerned had indicated good reason for the delay in applying, as a result, the allowance was put into payment from November 2016, the month after the application was received in the Department.

If the person concerned wishes to make an application for backdating, she should do so in writing, stating clearly the reason why the latest application was not submitted earlier.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Paternity Benefit

1213. Deputy Denise Mitchell asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of persons that have availed of paternity benefit in each of the years since its introduction in tabular form; and the overall cost for each of these years. [24416/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The information requested in respect of the number of people that have availed of paternity benefit since it was introduced on 1 September 2016 along with the overall cost for each of these years is set out in the following table:

PATERNITY BENEFIT	Recipients	Cost
2018 (to week ended 27/05/18)	9,468	€4,353,900.53
2017	26,559	€12,048,759.93
2016	5,013	€2,017,671.02

Carer's Allowance Applications

1214. Deputy Róisín Shortall asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the position regarding an application for a carer's payment by a person (details supplied) in Dublin 11; when a decision will be issued; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [24440/18]

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 30 April 2018.

The application is currently being examined by a deciding officer and once processed, the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Pension Provisions

1215. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection her plans to review the means assessment rules for capital sums held by applicants applying for the State pension (non-contributory) in view of the fact that applicants cannot derive a rate of return from capital sums equal to that of the deemed notional return for assessing capital under the payment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [24535/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Social welfare legislation provides that all income and capital belonging to the claimant and his or her spouse/partner (if applicable) is assessable for means-tested social assistance schemes, with the exception of certain disregards and exclusions provided for in the legislation. The purpose of the means test is to ensure that the State's resources are directed to those with the most financial need.

The State Pension (non-contributory) means test includes a value attributed to any capital a person may have. Capital refers to savings, investments, shares, cash-on-hands and property (excluding their own home). The value of all of these items is added together and a formula applied to their total value to calculate a person's weekly means.

Capital is assessed for most social assistance schemes, including the State Pension (non-contributory), using the following formula to establish weekly means:

It should be noted that where capital or property is assessed on this basis, any income received from its use (e.g. interest on savings, dividends from shares, rent from property) is not assessed as cash income.

This capital assessment formula is not intended to determine a potential rate of interest or income from the capital, but rather to ensure that claimants of means-tested social assistance payments, who have more than modest amounts of capital or savings, use at least some of these resources to provide for their financial needs.

Any changes to the current assessment arrangements would have to be considered in a budgetary context.

Jobseeker's Allowance

1216. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the annual cost of increasing jobseeker's allowance to €196 for all those under 26 years of age in receipt of the €107.70 and €152.80 rates. [24549/18]

1217. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the estimated annual cost of increasing the jobseeker's allowance to €152.80 per week for all those under 26 years of age in receipt of the €107.70 rate. [24550/18]

1218. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the estimated annual cost of increasing the jobseeker's allowance to €196 per week for all those under 26 years of age in receipt of the €152.80 rate. [24551/18]

1219. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if the jobseeker's allowance rate for those under 26 years of age to the full payment rate of €196 will be restored; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [24552/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1216 to 1219, inclusive, together.

The full year cost of increasing the weekly rate for jobseekers under the age of 26 from €107.70 and €152.80 to the maximum weekly rate of €198 would be €81.21 million in 2019. This includes the cost of increasing the qualified adult rate for those on the €107.70 rate to €131.40 per week.

The full year cost of increasing the jobseeker's allowance payment for 25 year olds on the €152.80 weekly rate to the maximum weekly rate of €198 per week would be €6.34 million in 2019.

The full year cost of increasing the jobseeker's allowance payment for 18-24 year olds on the €107.70 weekly rate to €152.80 per week would be €37.39 million in 2019. This includes the cost of increasing the qualified adult rate for those on the €107.70 rate to €131.40 per week.

It should be noted that these estimated costs are subject to change over the coming months in the context of emerging trends and associated revision of the estimated numbers of recipients for 2019.

Lower weekly rates for younger jobseeker's allowance recipients were introduced to protect young people from welfare dependency by providing them with a strong financial incentive to engage in education or training or to take up employment. Where a young jobseeker participates on an education or training programme they will receive the higher weekly rate of €198 which is the maximum personal rate for jobseeker's allowance.

The reduced rates of jobseeker's allowance do not apply to 18 -25 year olds with a qualified child, those making a claim for jobseeker's allowance where that claim is linked to a jobseeker's allowance claim made within the previous 12 months to which the maximum personal rate applied, those transferring directly to jobseeker's allowance from disability allowance, or young jobseekers on certain training programmes. The reduced rates also do not apply to 18-24 year olds who were in the care of the Child and Family Agency (TUSLA) during the period of 12 months before they reached the age of 18.

The appropriate rate of all weekly social welfare payments, including the rate for young jobseekers, will be considered by the Government in the context of budgetary deliberations.

Community Employment Schemes Eligibility

1220. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection how a person who has worked 48 days out of 365 days and has actively sought work in

a 12 month period is not eligible to participate on a community employment scheme (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [24587/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):

The aim of the Community Employment (CE) programme is to enhance the employability of the long-term unemployed and other specified disadvantaged groups by breaking the cycle of unemployment by providing a return to work routine. CE provides quality work experience and training opportunities for participants within their communities, thus improving a person's chances of returning to the labour market.

CE is not designed to cater for short-term unemployed persons as they are not as far removed from the open labour market. However, breaks from the live register of up to 30 days (i.e. 30 worked days) are permissible within the 12 month CE qualifying period. This ensures that CE continues to respond to its primary target group of long-term unemployed clients and those most distant from the labour market. In circumstances where breaks off the live register exceed 30 days, as in the case referred to where this person has an established work routine, other interventions may be more appropriate. Further information on these is available in the local Intreo centres.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Disability Allowance Applications

1221. Deputy Michael Healy-Rae asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if she will address a matter (details supplied) regarding financial assistance; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [24590/18]

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 1 May 2018.

On 30 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.

Programme for Government Implementation

1222. Deputy Micheál Martin asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of the implementation of the programme for partnership Government as it applies to her Department; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [24609/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Programme for a Partnership Government includes a wide range of commitments which fall directly within the remit of my Department.

The updated status of these commitments is set out in the following table.

Commitment	Status
“ [to] increase Rent Supplement ... by up to 15% taking account of geographic variations in market rents.... “	Increased rent limits were introduced on 1 July 2016. The limits were increased across the country, (by up to 30% in Dublin), in line with geographic variations of the rental market.
“ To protect low-income families in private rented accommodation and avoid further market rental inflation.. [to] expand access to the Tenancy Sustainment Protocol throughout the country. “	DEASP continues to provide flexibility in its administration of rent supplement to ensure that people can remain in their homes. DEASP also operates a protocol arrangement with Threshold in Dublin, Cork, Meath, Kildare, Wicklow and Galway City. These supports have assisted over 12,000 households with increased rental payments. DEASP is working with the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government to support the transfer of long term rent supplement recipients to the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP).
“to introduce a PRSI scheme for the self-employed”	Entitlement to the Treatment Benefit scheme was extended to self-employed workers who pay PRSI at Class S from March 2017; while access to the Invalidity Pension scheme was extended to these workers with effect from 1 December 2017
“ to introduce a new ‘Working Family Payment’, targeted at low-income families.”	In the context of Budget 2018 it was decided to re-designate the Family Income Supplement (FIS) scheme as the Working Family Payment (WFP), which will bring it more visibility as a payment aimed specifically at working families. Budget 2018 also provided for a €10 weekly increase in the threshold for receipt of the Working Family Payment for families with up to three children, with effect from 29 March 2018. This will particularly benefit low-income working families. The effectiveness of the Working Family Payment is currently being reviewed, along with the effectiveness of other employment and income supports. Other measures which were targeted at low-income families include a €20 weekly increase in the earnings disregard for the One Parent Family Payment and the Jobseekers’ Transitional Payment, from €110 to €130 per week. This is in addition to the €5 increase in the personal weekly rate of payment and the €2 per week increase in the qualified child payment. The Back to Work Family Dividend which was due to close to new applications in March 2018 has been retained. The payment value has increased to €31.80 per child in line with the increase in the payment for qualified children announced in Budget 2018.
“Reducing poverty levels by supporting an increase in the minimum wage to €10.50 per hour over the next 5 years. We will rely on the annual recommendations of the Low Pay Commission on the level of adjustment each year.”	In line with the recommendation from the Low Pay Commission, the national minimum wage was increased by 30 cent to €9.55 per hour from 1 January 2018. The Government has also accepted a recommendation from the Low Pay Commission regarding the allowance provided for board and lodging, resulting in a change from a weekly/daily rate to an hourly figure. This measure is of benefit to those on the minimum wage who are working part-time hours and where board is provided by the employer.
“We will tackle the problems caused by the increased casualisation of work that prevents workers from being able to save or have any job security.” “We will strengthen regulation on precarious work.”	On 2 May 2017 the Government approved the priority drafting of a Bill to address zero hour contracts, low hour contracts, banded hours and related matters. The Employment (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill was published on 7 December 2017. Second Stage of the Bill was completed in the Dáil on 15th February 2018. Committee Stage was completed on the 17th May 2018. Report Stage is expected to take place in the coming weeks.

Questions - Written Answers

Commitment	Status
“...Develop[ing] a new Integrated Framework for Social Inclusion, to tackle inequality and poverty.”	A public consultation process in relation to a new National Action Plan/Integrated framework for Social Inclusion commenced in February 2018. Consultation with other Ministers has also been undertaken. Publication of the new Plan is now envisaged in Q3 2018.
“... [to] publish a dedicated ‘Pathways to Work for Jobless Households’ to support jobless households into employment.”	The Action Plan on Jobless Households was published in August 2017 and aims, by 2020, to reduce the proportion of households that are jobless to 13% or less, and reduce the share of the 18-59 population resident in such households to less than 8%. Progress has been made on implementing the plan. In particular, Budget 2018 increased financial supports for working families through increasing earnings disregards and thresholds on the Working Family Payment and the Jobseekers Transition Payment; extending the life of the Back to Work Family Dividend, which was due to close to new entrants in March 2018; and increasing the national minimum wage. A wide-ranging consultation process has been undertaken with people with disabilities, parents of children with disabilities, and sectoral representatives.
“...actively encourage payments at Post Offices. “	All DSP staff were advised of the PfG commitment and reminded that customer wishes should be facilitated where appropriate when they wish to receive their payment at the Post Office.
“the rollout and extension of the Personal Microcredit Scheme, which is providing simple microloans to members and helping to combat the use of moneylenders”	Over 6,000 people are currently making Personal Micro Credit loan repayments via An Post with an unknown additional number (estimated at approximately 10%) making repayments by direct debit or standing order. To date, 107 Credit Unions at 254 locations are signed up to participate in the scheme. Engagement is continuing with the Credit Union representative bodies and individual credit unions to encourage wider national coverage.
“... invest in new services and caseworkers to support jobseekers through the network of local Intreo offices..... support a regional approach to Intreo offices ... review work activation and social welfare schemes to ensure that schemes do not contain anomalies that may impact unfairly on people in rural areas, including farmers.”	The Department’s 62 Intreo offices are located throughout the country and are managed on a regional basis. The Intreo network is managed by 10 regional managers at Principal Officer level who deliver services and supports in line with the needs of their particular region. (Positive changes relating to the Rural Social Scheme and the Farm Assist scheme are set out below.)
“... extend the Dental Treatment Benefit under the Social Insurance Fund to reimburse the cost of some routine dental treatments.”	The range of benefits available under the Treatment benefit scheme (dental and optical) was extended as announced in Budget 2017. The existing benefits were extended to self-employed contributors from 27 March 2017 and the optical scheme was restored in full from 28 October 2017; with a scale and polish or protracted periodontal treatment also reintroduced on the dental benefit scheme from 28 October 2017. The Department introduced a new system in October 2017 to support the administration of the scheme and also put in place a web portal (WelfarePartners) to support dentists, opticians and audiologists in transacting business (e.g. checking eligibility and submitting) online.

Commitment	Status
<p>...” the Departments of Health and Social Protection [to] work together to pursue a “Fit for Work Programme” to support more people to get back to work if they have an illness or disability.”</p>	<p>DEASP and D/Health have identified “Healthy You: Early Intervention” as the working title of the programme to reflect widespread evidence that early intervention in a person’s illness or health condition through a range of services and supports can lead to positive health, employment and income results. A working group has been established to promote a pilot project of early engagement with people with low back pain who are on sick leave from work, and develop a programme for health education and/or intervention with the aim of managing their condition/facilitating early recovery and return to work. The finer details of the pilot in terms of sample size, location, support services, resources and levels of intervention are currently being finalised.</p>
<p>“ ...to introduce flexibility and support in the social welfare system for people with severe and enduring mental health difficulties to transition into employment by ensuring a seamless return of their entitlements should a particular employment opportunity prove unsuitable. [and] ...address concerns surrounding the loss of secondary benefits, so that people are always better off in work.”</p>	<p>The Make Work Pay (MWP) report for People with Disabilities, published in April 2017, identified the need for flexibility in both the income support and the health (medical card) systems. This is particularly the case where a person with a disability takes up a job but that job does not work out. Anxiety in such circumstances can be particularly pronounced amongst those with mental health issues, given the episodic nature of such conditions. In line with a recommendation of the MWP report, a fast-track return to disability allowance protocol has been put in place. In addition to this initiative, people who are participating on the partial capacity benefit scheme may return to illness benefit or invalidity pension if they find that they cannot continue to work. Most recently, the Department participated as a partner organisation in the Integrating Employment and Mental Health Service project, which ran between 2015 and 2017. The aim of this project was to demonstrate how existing employment services (specifically the EmployAbility service) could practice the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) model of supported employment for clients with severe and enduring mental health issues. An evaluation report, Steps into Work, was launched by on the 8th February 2018 and found that through improved integration between mental health services and employment support services, improvements can be achieved in the employment outcomes of people with mental health difficulties. DEASP is now collaborating with the Department of Health and the HSE to extend the availability of IPS to all Mental Health Services in each Community Healthcare Organisation. This will see funding from the HSE Service Reform Fund (SRF) and funding from the HSE’s Clinical Programmes for 27.5 IPS employment specialists for a three year period.</p>
<p>“... consolidate all means testing under a single national body ensuring a single application process for services or entitlements across all government agencies.”</p>	<p>It is recognised that this would be a major project across a range of Government departments and agencies, including DEASP, that operate schemes and services on a means/income tested basis. Significant operational, legislative and technical challenges would be involved. IT developments in the DEASP in recent years have allowed for the capture and storage of means data and the reuse of that data. Amongst the many potential benefits of this reuse are a reduced administrative burden on staff and customers through greater accuracy of information, a reduced need to repeatedly ask for the same information and the ability to make better-informed decisions regarding reviews.</p>

Questions - Written Answers

Commitment	Status
“... an increase in the Disability Benefit and Allowance, Carer’s Benefit and Allowance, and Blind Person’s Pension” ... “increase the State Pension and the Living Alone Allowance above the rate of inflation.”	As announced in Budget 2018, the maximum rate of weekly social welfare payments - including State pensions, disability allowance and carer’s allowance - increased by €5 per week from end-March 2018. This builds on a similar increase in Budget 2017. There was also a €2 increase for each qualified dependent child, effective from end-March 2018, the first such increase since 2010.
“... support and expand supported employment opportunities and work with stakeholders to make supported employment more attractive to both prospective employers and employees.”	DEASP delivers assistance with the identification and take-up of supported employment opportunities for people with disabilities through its EmployAbility service. An evaluation of this service has been completed and a number of proposals to improve the operation of the service are currently being considered.
“... highlight incentives for employers to employ a person with a disability, roll out a national awareness campaign”	Information on supports available for the employment of persons with a disability are available on an ongoing basis at events taking place all over the country, including employer briefings. For instance, a Disability Awareness and Support event was recently held in Tralee, at which stakeholders engaged in the disability arena, including the National Learning Network (NLN) and Employability, provided information on services available including training, grants, equipment etc. The Education and Training Board was also in attendance. There were 400 visitors to the event which included clients with a disability, parents and carers. The DEASP has recently completed a major consultation exercise with disability stakeholders following the recommendations of the Make Work Pay report and the issue of how best to engage with employers in order to improve employment opportunities for persons with disabilities will be further considered in light of that exercise. The mission outlined in the DEASP Employer Relations Strategy has broadened from ‘to build effective relationships with employers with the aim of increasing recruitment activity and, in particular, “increasing placements into employment from the Live Register “ to “increasing placement into employment of the Department’s clients” to reflect the inclusion of people with a disability. The Strategy also commits to fully integrate the provision of employer services within Intreo Centres.
“... fully protect the Free Travel pass for all pensioners.”	The Free Travel scheme is fully protected. An additional €10m is being invested in the scheme to encourage new operators into the scheme and to encourage a broadening of coverage in more remote parts of rural Ireland.
“...in recognition of the vital role of schemes such as the Rural Social Scheme, Community Employment Schemes, BTEA and Farm Assist in rural communities and in activating the unemployed, ...to make suitable recommendations to strengthen provision in this area...”	Budget 2018 provides for 250 additional places on the Rural Social Scheme, increasing the number to 3,350 in 2018. The distribution of the additional 250 RSS places was announced on Friday 23 March 2018. The Implementing Bodies (Local Development Companies) have started recruitment for the places allocated.
“Review ... the Farm Assist Scheme, recognising the challenges facing farmers on low income.”	Budget 2017 introduced important changes to the Farm Assist scheme, which included assessing 70% of farm income (down from 100%) and re-introducing income disregards for children. Budget 2018 provided for a €5 increase in the rate of farm assist payable from 26th March, bringing the maximum personal rate of farm assist payable from €193 per week to €198 per week.
“... review the Fish Assist scheme in recognition of the irregular earning patterns of fishermen, in an effort to respond to difficult financial circumstances.”	The Budget 2017 improvements to the Farm Assist scheme were also applied to the Fish Assist scheme. Claimants of Fish Assist have also benefited from the increase of €5 per week since 26th March 2018.

Commitment	Status
“.... develop a system that fosters independence through retraining and employment ... provide the resources to invest in services that protect the weakest and most vulnerable in our society from poverty and exclusion.”	The Action Plan for Jobless Households was published in September 2017. Budget 2018 implemented a number of the measures envisaged in relation to work incentives; a major consultation – with people with disabilities, their parents, and representative bodies -- on reforms to disability payments was launched in February 2018; pilot delivery of employment services to adult dependants of jobseekers’ claimants will commence in Q2 2018.
“...carry out an immediate review of the financial supports available to the unemployed or those returning to the education system to ensure the greatest possible uptake of continuing education by eliminating current barriers.”	DEASP has commissioned a study to explore the drivers of negative employment outcomes of participants on the Back to Education Allowance Scheme with a view to informing the scheme direction.

JobPath Programme

1223. **Deputy Paul Murphy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the reason a person (details supplied) was targeted for inclusion in the JobPath scheme run by a company; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [24652/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): As the Deputy will know the JobPath activation service is to help long term unemployed jobseekers to find sustainable full time work. Selection for referral to JobPath is by means of system based stratified random sampling; the objective being to ensure equity in selection and also that people referred to JobPath are a representative of the long-term cohort on the Live Register.

The duration of a person’s jobseekers claim is recorded in terms of days of unemployment, any two such periods not separated by more than 52 weeks are considered to be the same continuous period of unemployment - this is known as linking the claims. Long-term jobseekers that may have left the live register to go into employment for less than a year are still considered to be long-term if they reopen their claim within that 52 week period which is the case for the customer concerned. The linking of claims allows the client to retain certain entitlements (for example no waiting days and other supplemental benefits) and they are also available for selection for activation services including JobPath.

For those people who are referred to the JobPath service after a short period of work, the support and assistance of their personal advisor will ensure that the skills and experience they have gained in the job are built on if necessary and that they are factored into all future job applications.

Supplementary Welfare Allowance Eligibility

1224. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if supplementary welfare can be facilitated in the case of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [24681/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The person concerned was awarded an interim payment of supplementary welfare allowance (SWA) following the withdrawal of widow’s pension payment on grounds of cohabitation. The SWA payment was awarded as an interim payment while the person concerned was awaiting a deci-

sion on an appeal against the disallowance of her pension and who was advised that a negative decision on the appeal would result in discontinuation of the SWA payment.

On 27/04/18 the Social Welfare Appeals Office advised the appellant of a decision upholding the disallowance of widow's pension. The SWA payment was suspended on 10/05/18 in line with the outcome of this appeal.

If circumstances have changed, it is open to the person concerned to submit a new application for widow's pension or supplementary welfare allowance. She should include all relevant documentation in support of her application.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Social Welfare Schemes

1225. Deputy Catherine Murphy asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of a pilot scheme that was introduced for jobseeker's allowance and benefit recipients whereby practitioners of certain arts would still be entitled to their social welfare payment for a certain amount of time as they attempt to build a career in the arts; the uptake of this scheme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [24694/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): A pilot initiative to assist self-employed visual artists and writers who apply to my Department for jobseeker's allowance was launched in June 2017. The initiative, which is a commitment under the Creative Ireland Programme, involved collaboration between my Department and what is now the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, with the support and advice of the Arts Council. It was decided after a process of consultation that the initiative would apply to members of Visual Arts Ireland (VAI) and the Irish Writers Centre (IWC).

A key feature of the initiative is that it acknowledges the status of self-employed artists and writers and gives them a 12 month window to focus on building up their work before they become subject to labour market activation services provided by my Department. Naturally, there are safeguards in place to ensure that claimants are professional visual artists and writers and, in addition, applicants must satisfy all of the usual qualifying conditions for jobseeker's allowance, including a means test.

There were 47 artists and writers on the scheme at the beginning of June. The figure of 47 does not imply that there are only 47 professional visual artists or writers in receipt of jobseeker's allowance. It simply means that there are 47 recipients of the payment who are availing of the pilot arrangements and therefore they are not subject to the activation process for 12 months. Approximately 61 artists and writers have availed of the scheme to date.

The general population of jobseeker's allowance recipients is not classified as to their occupation or profession so it is not possible to say how many writers or visual artists are in receipt of jobseekers allowance. The arrangements for the pilot scheme will be reviewed later this year.

Disability Allowance Data

1226. Deputy John Brady asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of persons in receipt of disability allowance. [24746/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection

(Deputy Finian McGrath): The information requested by the Deputy in relation to the number of recipients in receipt of disability allowance (DA) is reported on a point in time basis. The number of persons in receipt of DA at the end of May 2018 was 136,460.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Social Welfare Payments Administration

1227. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection further to Parliamentary Question No. 210 of 16 May 2018, the extent of receipts that must be retained; and the legislative reference providing for same. [24750/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): Social welfare legislation provides that where a person is medically certified as being unable to manage their own financial affairs, the Minister may appoint an agent who is responsible for collecting the person's social welfare payment and acting on their behalf, with a duty to act in the best interests of the person. The agent may be a parent or other qualified person.

The appointed agent is responsible for ensuring that all payments received are used to the benefit of the person and in their best interest. They are also required, under the legislation, to keep a record of all transactions involving the monies received and produce these records when requested to do so by an officer of the Minister. All receipts should be retained for the duration of the agency arrangement.

The legislation governing the responsibilities of agents in such cases is contained in Article 202A of the Social Welfare (Consolidated Claims, Payments and Control) Regulations, 2007 (S.I. No. 142 of 2007).

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Disability Allowance

1228. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if an anomaly (details supplied) regarding the exclusion of persons with disabilities from the artistic and cultural community will be reviewed; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [24751/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): Disability allowance (DA) is a means tested scheme and means are assessed in line with the provisions specified in the relevant social welfare legislation. In summary, any income, with some exceptions, belonging to the person is assessable as means for DA purposes.

Another condition for receipt of DA is that a person has an injury, disease or physical or mental disability that has continued (or may be expected to continue for at least one year) and that as a result of this disability, is substantially restricted in undertaking work that would otherwise be suitable for a person of his/her age, experience and qualifications.

The DA scheme is structured to encourage recipients to avail of opportunities to engage in rehabilitative work where this is appropriate, either in self-employment or in insurable employment. When an individual engages in rehabilitative work, they can avail of an income disregard

of €120 per week, and 50% of earnings between €120 and €350 are also disregarded, for the purpose of the means test.

Where the DA recipient commences self-employment, we require them to indicate when they are starting and the type of work involved. We also request that they keep full records of their income and expenses from the date on which the self-employment commences. This is to ensure that the appropriate evidence is available to a deciding officer to calculate the average earnings over the period most appropriate, having regard to the circumstances of each case.

Approval must first be sought from my Department in order for the work to be considered as rehabilitative. The term ‘rehabilitative’ is not defined in legislation and is broadly interpreted in administrative practice as including appropriate work that would be regarded as good for the person and would be expected to result in more positive outcomes in symptom levels, self-esteem, quality of life and social functioning. In all cases the recipient must forward a letter from their own doctor indicating that the work is rehabilitative.

The Make Work Pay (MWP) report for people with disabilities, published in 2017, made a number of recommendations including that the requirement that work be of a ‘rehabilitative nature’ for the DA earnings disregard should be dispensed with. This would mean that a report from a doctor would no longer be required before commencing work and that the focus is on capacity rather than incapacity. Legislation is required to give effect to this change and is included in the Social Welfare, Pensions and Civil Registration Bill 2017.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Employment Rights

1229. Deputy Aindrias Moynihan asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection her plans to examine legislation regarding statutory holiday entitlements (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [24773/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): An employee’s entitlement to annual leave is set out in section 19 of the Organisation of Working Time Act 1997 (the 1997 Act). Section 19 transposed Article 7 of the original EU Working Time Directive (93/104/EC) – now consolidated by Directive 2003/88/EC. Under section 19 of the 1997 Act, an employee acquires an entitlement to 4 weeks’ annual leave if he or she works at least 1,365 hours in a leave year, or one-third of a working week for each month in the leave year in which he or she works at least 117 hours, or 8 per cent of the hours he or she works in a leave year (but subject to a maximum of 4 working weeks).

The 1997 Act also provides for 9 public holidays in addition to the statutory annual leave entitlements.

Any annual leave entitlements in the contract of employment over and above the statutory minimum will be a matter for negotiation between the employer and employee.

As the legislation on annual leave emanates from an EU Directive, national legislation on annual leave will be affected by rulings of the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) in cases taken under the EU Working Time Directive. Some of the most significant of these CJEU rulings relate to the accrual of annual leave entitlement during sick leave. These rulings were formally transposed into Irish law by section 86(1) of the Workplace Relations Act 2015 which amended the annual leave provisions in the 1997 Act. The amendments to the 1997 Act provided as follows:

- Employees accrue statutory annual leave entitlement while on certified sick leave.
- An annual leave carryover period of 15 months after a leave year will apply to those employees who could not, due to illness, take annual leave during the relevant leave year or during the normal carryover period of 6 months.
- On termination of employment, payment in lieu of untaken accrued annual leave will apply to leave which was untaken as a result of illness in circumstances where the employee leaves the employment within a period of 15 months following the end of the leave year during which the statutory leave entitlement accrued.

I will continue to monitor any developments at EU level in relation to annual leave entitlements. For the time being, I have no plans to increase the current statutory entitlement, which is, as I have said, a minimum level of leave above which employers and employees are free to agree better terms.

It is worth my pointing out, for information, that the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) provides general information on employment, equality and industrial relations legislation, through the Workplace Relations Information and Customer Service Unit which can be contacted at Lo-call: 1890 80 80 90 or 059-9178990 or via its website www.workplacerelations.ie.

Disability Allowance Eligibility

1230. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the eligibility for a disability allowance in the case of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [24783/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): Disability Allowance is a weekly allowance paid to people with a specified disability who are aged over 16 and under 66. The disability must be expected to last for at least one year and the allowance is subject to a medical assessment, a means test and a habitual residency test.

A completed application form for disability allowance must be submitted to the Department in order to have eligibility checked and a formal decision made on entitlement. To date no application for disability allowance has been received.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Public Services Card

1231. Deputy Catherine Murphy asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the consequences or processes that are followed when persons cannot attend an appointment for a PSC when invited to do so by her Department due to medical reasons; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [24786/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Department has a variety of arrangements in place to ensure that citizens can SAFE register and obtain a Public Services Card (PSC), irrespective of their location or place of residence. As at 30 April 2018, the number of Departmental customers in payment with a PSC was 1.63 million persons.

Questions - Written Answers

The majority of these SAFE registrations are through attendance in person at the local INTREO Centre or Social Welfare Branch Office. Customers may be invited to attend, or can make contact themselves to arrange an appointment or make an appointment online. There are over 100 SAFE registration locations nationally. It is the intention that, in due course, registration would be available at all departmental locations.

Arrangements are also in place for other persons, mainly pensioners in receipt of payments at Post Offices, who can complete SAFE registration and access a PSC by postal methods. Customers who fulfil the relevant criteria are written to offering this option. This procedure provides a more convenient method of registration for these individuals. Over 300,000 customers have availed of this option. If the Deputy is aware of a particular case which might fulfil the relevant criteria in regard to this option, I will ask my officials to make contact with the individual concerned.

Having regard to mobile SAFE registrations, these are carried out specifically on request and usually at community/group settings to register customers unable to attend in person at DEASP locations due to mobility, disability or incapacity challenges.

The primary legislative provisions for SAFE registration and identity verification are set out in the Social Welfare Consolidation Act, 2005 (as amended). The legislation requires a person to satisfy the Department as to their identity and ultimately allows for disallowance or disqualification from receipt of a benefit in the event that it is not done.

The Department makes it clear to customers in receipt of social welfare payments or Free Travel entitlements that they need to complete a SAFE 2 registration to access, or continue to access, payments and entitlements.

The Department also issues reminder letters to customers, as required. Customers may also book a different time/date to suit them, either online via www.mywelfare.ie, by contacting the Department's offices, or by walking in to ask for the next available appointment.

In this context, I want to make it clear that customers who face bona fide challenges to in-person attendance will not be disadvantaged, in terms of access to or eligibility for payments and/or availing of Free Travel entitlements.

The decision to stop a payment is never made lightly and the Department will consider all elements of eligibility to that particular payment or entitlement. However, where a customer does not satisfy the Department in relation to identity in line with legislative requirements, a payment can be disqualified. In advance of any such disqualification, the Department makes every effort to engage with the customer to explain the process and the consequences of potential disqualification.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Services for People with Disabilities

1232. Deputy Pat Buckley asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the services available to assist young adults with a disability such as a person (details supplied) who had been availing of school transport accessing their continuing education as before; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [24815/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): Disability Allowance is a weekly allowance paid to people with

a specified disability who are aged 16 or over and under the age of 66. This disability must be expected to last for at least one year and the allowance is subject to a medical examination, a means test and habitual residency conditions.

All DA recipients are eligible for the Free Travel Pass, which entitles the bearer to free travel on public transport in Ireland (and certain private services). A companion pass may also be applied for if it is required. The Free Travel Pass is also available to those in receipt of Carer's Allowance recipients. The first and second named in the above question are in receipt of this benefit.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Allowance Eligibility

1233. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the eligibility for a carer's allowance in the case of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [24836/18]

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.

My department has to date not received an application from the person concerned for CA. If they wish to make an application, they should complete and return the application form (CR1) that I have arranged to have issued to them.

Only on receipt of a fully completed application form can their entitlement be determined.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Benefit Applications

1234. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the progress to date in the determination of an application for carer's benefit in the case of a person (details supplied); the reason for delays in reaching a decision; when the application is likely to be concluded; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [24849/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Carer's benefit (CARB) is a payment made to insured people who leave the workforce to care for a person(s) in need of full-time care and attention.

An application for CARB was received from the person concerned on 10 May 2018.

The application was awarded to the person concerned on 6 June 2018 and the first payment will issue to her nominated bank account on 14 June 2018.

Arrears of allowance due from 8 March 2018 to 13 June 2018 will also issue.

The person concerned was notified on 6 June 2018 of this decision.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Questions - Written Answers
Invalidity Pension Appeals

1235. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an appeal for an invalidity pension by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [24867/18]

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 this lady on 14 November 2017. She was refused IP on the grounds that the medical conditions for the scheme were not satisfied. She was notified on 09 January 2018 of this decision, the reasons for it and of her right of review or appeal.

She requested a review and lodged an appeal of this decision and submitted further medical evidence in support of her request. Following a review of all the information available it has been decided that there is no change to the original decision and a submission has been prepared by the department and forwarded to the SWAO for determination. The SWAO will be in touch with her directly in relation to the progress of her appeal.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Pensions Legislation

1236. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of efforts being made to ensure that an association (details supplied) is given an opportunity to represent its members in a way it views is sufficient; if section 50 of the Pensions Act 1990 will be amended in this regard; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [24876/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The governance of an individual pension scheme is generally a matter for the scheme trustees. Scheme trustees have duties and responsibilities under trust law, under other relevant legislation and under the Pensions Act 1990, as amended. The duties of pension scheme trustees include administering the trust in accordance with the law and the terms of the trust deed and rules. It is important to note that pension scheme trustees have no function in negotiating improved benefits and entitlements for members under a pension scheme. Consequently any decisions made by corporate or individual trustees of an occupational pension scheme are governed by the relevant legislation. The provisions of the Pensions Act are enforced through the supervision of the Pensions Authority. The Pensions Authority makes information available on its website to assist members, employers and trustees understand the procedures for member participation in the selection of trustees.

If the funding of a pension scheme is not sufficient to satisfy the Funding Standard, the trustees may apply to the Pensions Authority for a direction under section 50 of the Pensions Act 1990. Under such an order, accrued benefits relating to members' past service can be reduced. Prior to making an application to the Pensions Authority, trustees must have undertaken a comprehensive review of the scheme with a view to the long term stability and sustainability of the scheme. Before making an application for a section 50 direction, the trustees must notify in writing, all members of the scheme and any other person in receipt of benefits under the scheme, and also notify any authorised trade union representing members, or any representa-

tive group that meets certain requirements, of the proposed reductions. This notification must include the circumstances of the Section 50 application, and the proposed reductions, including general illustrations of their effect. It is important to note that all pension scheme members, not just pensioners, have one month to make written observations to trustees on proposed section 50 applications to the Pensions Authority. Trustees must consider these observations before making an application to the Pensions Authority.

The provisions in section 50 of the Pensions Act have been reviewed on a number of occasions in recent years. Changes to this section of the Act were made in 2009 and again in 2013. The Social Welfare and Pensions Act 2013 amended section 50 of the Act to broaden the options available to the trustees of a pension scheme when considering a restructure of scheme benefits. These changes were designed to spread the risk of scheme underfunding across all scheme members and beneficiaries in any consideration of an application by the trustees of the scheme to restructure scheme benefits. It is a matter for the trustees of a scheme, who are required under trust law to act in the best interests of all scheme members, to determine how the provisions in section 50 of the Act might be applied.

Officials of my Department and I have met with association concerned and have explained how it is a legal requirement under the Pensions Act 1990, as amended, that trustees must act in the best interests of all scheme members whether active, deferred, or retired. We have also explained that if any individual has evidence that pension scheme trustees are not acting in the best interests of all members they should complain to the scheme trustees in the first instance. If the complainant is not satisfied with the trustees' reply they should raise their concerns with the Pensions Authority.

I believe that current legislation allows for the best interests of all pension scheme members to be taken into account by pension scheme trustees. Therefore I currently have no plans to amend the Pensions Act in this regard.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Allowance Applications

1237. Deputy Sean Sherlock asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the position regarding a carer's allowance for a person (details supplied). [24877/18]

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.

My department has not to date received an application from the person concerned for CA. If they wish to make an application, they should complete and return the application form (CR1) that I have arranged to have issued to them.

Only on receipt of a fully completed application form can their entitlement to CA be determined.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

JobPath Programme

1238. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if the case of a person (details supplied) will be examined; the reason the person is being pressurised to engage with a JobPath scheme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [24881/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): 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 advisors employed by external contractors such as the JobPath providers.

In relation to the individual circumstance that the Deputy has raised it is the case, as it is for all jobseekers pursuing part-time educational courses including Springboard, that they must satisfy the condition of being available for and genuinely seeking employment and must engage with any activation service to which they are referred. All activities and scheduled meetings organised by the activation service including the JobPath service will be arranged to allow the jobseekers to meet their course commitments.

It is not, as the Deputy suggests, a matter of any individual being pressurised but ensuring that all jobseekers are offered an activation service. People engaged with the JobPath service receive intensive individual support to help overcome barriers on their journey back to full-time sustainable work, including self-employment.

Any jobseeker with the JobPath service who wishes to start their own business is eligible to apply for a Back to Work Enterprise Allowance (BTWEA); they will be advised by their personal advisor to contact their local Intreo centre where additional related support and advice is available from an Intreo Case Officer and the local development company if appropriate. Any jobseeker that has their application for BTWEA awarded will be withdrawn from the JobPath programme.

For people who do not qualify for the BTWEA, the JobPath companies may provide the relevant support and training either in house or with an external training provider, to assist the jobseeker in growing their business.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Commencement of Legislation

1239. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when section 22(3C) of Civil Registration Act 2004 as inserted by section 6(e) of the Civil Registration Act 2014 and-or other relevant legislation will be commenced to empower civil registrars to put into operation a provision in force since January 2016 ending the presumption in law that a woman's husband is the father of the child if the child is born more than ten months after they separated. [24896/18]

1240. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when section 22(3C) of Civil Registration Act 2004 as inserted by section 6(e) of the Civil Registration Act 2014 and-or other relevant legislation will be commenced to empower civil registrars to put into operation a provision in force since January 2016 ending the presumption in law that a woman's husband is the father of the child if the child is born more than ten months after they separated; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [24899/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1239 and 1240 together.

Section 22(3C) of Civil Registration Act 2004 (as inserted by section 6(e) of the Civil Registration Act 2014) provides for registration of a father's name, other than that of the husband, where the mother is married and has been living apart from her husband during the period of 10 months ending immediately before the birth of the child, and a decree of divorce, a decree of divorce *a mensa et thoro*, a decree of nullity of marriage, or a deed of separation, has not been granted by a court.

Certain provisions of the Civil Registration (Amendment) Act 2014, such as those relating to marriages of convenience, were commenced in August of 2015. However, a number of the sections of the Act, including section 6(e), have yet to be commenced pending the roll-out of training to staff of the Civil Registration Service who are employees of the HSE. The General Register Office is in a position to begin provision of training as soon as the HSE notifies it of the dates and venues.

Social Welfare Offices

1241. Deputy Tony McLoughlin asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if she will request the management of the social protection office in Summerhill, County Sligo, to enforce new measures whereby members of its workforce are not allowed to park in the Summerhill village and circular road area in view of the fact that this ongoing problem is causing the residents of the estate many problems with accessing their homes; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [24909/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): This is a public road and there are currently no parking restrictions on that part of the road in question. Notwithstanding this, however, and on foot of concerns expressed by the local residents association who recently met with local management, a notice has issued to all staff highlighting the concerns and requesting that staff only use the Department's car parking facilities. There has been a very good response from staff to this request and local management will keep the situation under review.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Pension Provisions

1242. Deputy Darragh O'Brien asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection her plans to establish an independent review group within her Department to assess the level and impact of cuts suffered by all categories of members in a pension scheme (details supplied) due to changes in legislation and in particular the Social Welfare and Pensions Act 2014 and subsequent reductions in members benefits; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [24940/18]

1243. Deputy Darragh O'Brien asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection her plans to consider in the preparation of budget 2019 specific measures targeted at members of a pension scheme (details supplied) to reduce the impact of cuts to their pension benefits; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [24945/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I

propose to take Questions Nos. 1242 and 1243 together.

The Deputy will appreciate that I cannot intervene in the pension arrangements applying to a particular pension scheme or introduce any measures which would benefit the members of a particular pension scheme to the exclusion of members of similar pension schemes.

While I am very conscious that any reduction in benefits can have a significant impact on scheme members, any such consideration is a matter for the pension scheme trustee, the companies participating in the scheme, the scheme members and the Pensions Authority.

As the Deputy is aware the scheme in question is now the subject of legal proceedings. Therefore, it would be inappropriate for me to comment any further on the matter.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Community Employment Schemes Supervisors

1244. Deputy Mary Butler asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the progress made on a number of issues which have recently been raised with her officials with regard to community employment supervisors agreements and working conditions; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [24976/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Community Employment (CE) scheme supervisors are employees of private companies in the community and voluntary sector that receive public funding. My Department is not the employer of the supervisors and such employees are not public servants.

The issue of addressing the entitlement of CE supervisors to an occupational pension is primarily a matter for the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. A Community Sector High Level Forum, chaired by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform is currently examining this issue. My Department is represented on this group, as are the unions, Pobal and other relevant Government Departments.

I am very conscious that any solution to this issue will require careful consideration and should have regard to all Community and Voluntary Sector employees and the implications for scarce Exchequer resources, particularly in light of the large size of the Community and Voluntary sector in Ireland.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Question No. 1245 answered with Question No. 1200.

Disability Allowance Payments

1246. Deputy Michael Healy-Rae asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when arrears relating to a disability allowance for a person (details supplied) will issue; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25004/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): The person concerned has been in receipt of disability allowance (DA) since 9 August 2000 with the exception of periods on FAS training when the DA payment was stopped. Since 5 October 2016 this lady has been employed and assessed with means of €42.50 weekly from her

employment.

The person concerned submitted letters on 4 April 2018 and 31 May 2018 requesting that DA refund her for individual days that she was not paid from her employer.

When assessing Means for Disability Allowance we have to establish an acceptable average pattern of earnings which takes account of fluctuations in earnings over a period of time as DA is a long term scheme and it is not feasible to adjust a customer's rate week by week.

We have contacted this lady and requested the information required in order to carry out a review of her entitlements.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Pension Provisions

1247. Deputy Jack Chambers asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if a matter regarding changes to pension calculations and age of eligibility for a pension (details supplied) will be addressed; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25011/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Government intends to introduce a Total Contributions Approach (TCA) to establishing level of entitlement for the contributory state pension from 2020 onwards. However, notwithstanding various inaccurate media reports, the criteria required for a full pension under that new approach have not yet been determined and are currently subject to a public consultation which I launched on 28 May last. These final details will not be decided upon until I have considered the submissions received in this process. This public consultation is available on my Department's website and I would encourage all interested stakeholders to contribute to the survey there.

As with the current Yearly Average approach, the new TCA will allow credited contributions for periods of jobseeking and illness, when signing for benefits.

Finally, as provided for in the Social Welfare and Pensions Act 2011, the State pension age will be increased in phases to 67 in 2021 and to 68 in 2028.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Illness Benefit Eligibility

1248. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the level of support available to a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25013/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): Illness Benefit is a short term scheme intended for persons who are unable to work due to illness or injury. It is paid while the incapacitated person remains unable to work and continues to meet the conditions set out in the scheme. There is, however, a maximum payment period of two years after which payment will cease.

The person concerned applied to my Department for Illness Benefit from 20 March 2018 and was paid from 27 March 2018 to 3 April 2018 when a final medical certificate was received.

She made a further claim for Illness Benefit from 4 May 2018 and this claim is in payment from 11 May 2018 at a weekly rate of €198.00.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Household Benefits Scheme

1249. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if the income limits for the household benefits package and the fuel allowance automatically increase in line with increases in the State pension (contributory) only; if they also increase in line with the State pension (non-contributory) or other primary social welfare payments; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25088/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Free Fuel allowance is based upon a means-test. Household Benefits may be too, depending on a person's circumstances. In both cases, the threshold is the rate of the State pension (contributory) plus €100. Currently this amounts to €343.30.

As the income limit for the means test is based on the rate of the State pension (contributory), any Budgetary increases in the rates of payment automatically increases the income limits.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Disability Allowance Data

1250. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if she will address a matter raised in correspondence (details supplied) regarding disability allowance; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25138/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): Disability allowance (DA) is a means tested scheme and means are assessed in line with the provisions specified in the relevant social welfare legislation. In summary, any income, with some exceptions, belonging to the person is assessable as means for DA purposes.

Another condition for receipt of DA is that a person has an injury, disease or physical or mental disability that has continued (or may be expected to continue for at least one year) and that as a result of this disability, is substantially restricted in undertaking work that would otherwise be suitable for a person of his/her age, experience and qualifications.

The DA scheme is structured to encourage recipients to avail of opportunities to engage in rehabilitative work where this is appropriate, either in self-employment or in insurable employment. When an individual engages in rehabilitative work, they can avail of an income disregard of €120 per week, and 50% of earnings between €120 and €350 are also disregarded, for the purpose of the means test.

Where the DA recipient commences self-employment, we require them to indicate when they are starting and the type of work involved. We also request that they keep full records of their income and expenses from the date on which the self-employment commences. This is to ensure that the appropriate evidence is available to a deciding officer to calculate the average earnings over the period most appropriate, having regard to the circumstances of each case.

Approval must first be sought from my Department in order for the work to be considered

as rehabilitative. The term ‘rehabilitative’ is not defined in legislation and is broadly interpreted in administrative practice as including appropriate work that would be regarded as good for the person and would be expected to result in more positive outcomes in symptom levels, self-esteem, quality of life and social functioning. In all cases the recipient must forward a letter from their own doctor indicating that the work is rehabilitative.

The Make Work Pay (MWP) report for people with disabilities, published in 2017, made a number of recommendations including that the requirement that work be of a ‘rehabilitative nature’ for the DA earnings disregard should be dispensed with. This would mean that a report from a doctor would no longer required before commencing work and that the focus is on capacity rather than incapacity. Legislation is required to give effect to this change and is included in the Social Welfare, Pensions and Civil Registration Bill 2017.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Commencement of Legislation

1251. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the sections and parts of all legislation brought forward by her Department in each of the past four years that have yet to be commenced; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25177/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): My Department is responsible for the legislation underpinning the social welfare code, occupational and private pensions, civil registration and gender recognition, redundancy and employer’s insolvency, employment rights and the Citizens Information Board / Comhairle.

Two provisions from 2014 which amended the Social Welfare Consolidation Act 2005 have yet to be commenced. In addition, several provisions of the Civil Registration (Amendment) Act 2014 have yet to be commenced.

Details of these provisions are set out in the following tables.

There are no provisions from 2015 to 2018 that are not yet commenced. Also there are no provisions from any other legislation for which my Department is responsible that are not yet commenced.

Social Welfare & Pensions Acts

Uncommenced Provision	Description	Status
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Questions - Written Answers

Social Welfare and Pensions Act 2014 - Section 9 - Section 10	Clarifies the provisions contained in Part 6 of the Social Welfare Consolidation Act (SWCA) 2005 in relation to entitlement to family income supplement (FIS) in cases where the claimant is living apart from his or her spouse or civil partner and children. Clarifies the provisions contained in Part 6 of the SWCA 2005 relating to the impact of a change of circumstances on continuing entitlement to FIS during the 52 week entitlement period and on the weekly rate of FIS payable during that period.	It is expected that the provisions of sections 9 and 10 will be commenced in due course.
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Civil Registration (Amendment) Act 2014

Uncommenced Provision	Description	Status
- Section 5	Provides that a person who is a qualified informant must produce to the registrar any evidence, including documentary evidence relating to a birth as requested by the registrar. The section also provides that a Superintendent Registrar may complete the registration of a birth where, in exceptional circumstances, a qualified informant has not signed the register to allow completion of the registration. Under this section a child who has attained the age of 18 years may be considered as a qualified informant in relation to the registration or re-registration of their own birth entry.	To be commenced following receipt of confirmation that the HSE is in a position to administer the necessary civil registration arrangements. To be commenced following receipt of confirmation that the HSE is in a position to administer the necessary civil registration arrangements.
- Section 6	This section amends section 22 of the Civil Registration Act 2004 and contains a number of amendments relating to the registration of the father's name where the parents are not married.	To be commenced following receipt of confirmation that the HSE is in a position to administer the necessary civil registration arrangements.
- Section 7	Provides for the re-registration of a birth and contains a number of amendments to section 23 of the 2004 Act.	To be commenced following receipt of confirmation that the HSE is in a position to administer the necessary civil registration arrangements.
- Section 8	Amends the 2004 Act by the insertion of a new section which provides for the re-registration of a birth of a child, where the parents were not married on the date of the birth, on foot of a court order.	To be commenced following receipt of confirmation that the HSE is in a position to administer the necessary civil registration arrangements.

Uncommenced Provision	Description	Status
- Section 9	Provides for the amendment of the 2004 Act by insertion of a new section 25A which provides that where the parents of the child cannot agree on a surname that the registrar may complete the registration by leaving the surname blank or in cases where a surname is already registered, that the existing surname shall remain.	To be commenced following receipt of confirmation that the HSE is in a position to administer the necessary civil registration arrangements. To be commenced following receipt of confirmation that the HSE is in a position to administer the necessary civil registration arrangements.
- Section 11	Amends section 37 of the 2004 Act to extend the definition of a qualified informant of a death.	To be commenced following receipt of confirmation that the HSE is in a position to administer the necessary civil registration arrangements. To be commenced following receipt of confirmation that the HSE is in a position to administer the necessary civil registration arrangements.
- Section 12	Provides that early neonatal deaths are notified to the Superintendent Registrar of the area where the death occurred. Provides for a record of deaths of Irish citizens who die abroad who were ordinarily resident within the state within 5 years prior to their death.	To be commenced following receipt of confirmation that the HSE is in a position to administer the necessary civil registration arrangements. To be commenced following receipt of confirmation that the HSE is in a position to administer the necessary civil registration arrangements.
- Section 13	Amends section 46 of the 2004 Act.	To be commenced following receipt of confirmation that the HSE is in a position to administer the necessary civil registration arrangements. To be commenced following receipt of confirmation that the HSE is in a position to administer the necessary civil registration arrangements.
- Section 15(a)	Provides for the recognition of certain marriages carried out at foreign embassies in the State.	Superseded by the enactment of the Marriage Act 2015. Superseded by the enactment of the Marriage Act 2015. To be commenced following receipt of confirmation that the HSE is in a position to administer the necessary civil registration arrangements.
- Section 19(1)	Amends section 59B of the 2004 Act.	To be commenced following receipt of confirmation that the HSE is in a position to administer the necessary civil registration arrangements. To be commenced following receipt of confirmation that the HSE is in a position to administer the necessary civil registration arrangements.
- Section 21(a)	Amends section 59C of the 2004 Act.	To be commenced following receipt of confirmation that the HSE is in a position to administer the necessary civil registration arrangements.
- Section 22	Provides for reduced cost certs where required to be produced to prove age, civil status or death.	To be commenced following receipt of confirmation that the HSE is in a position to administer the necessary civil registration arrangements. Not commenced until further consultation. Pending further clarification of Data Protection issues. To be commenced following receipt of confirmation that the HSE is in a position to administer the necessary civil registration arrangements.
- Section 26(1)	Amends section 64 of the 2004 Act providing for the cancellation of entries in the registers.	Consequential amendments, to be commenced following receipt of confirmation that the HSE is in a position to administer the necessary civil registration arrangements.
- Section 27(a) & (c)	Deletes reference to consultation with the Minister for Social and Family Affairs in section 66 of the 2004 Act. Provides for sharing of information with the Road Safety Authority.	Consequential amendments, to be commenced following receipt of confirmation that the HSE is in a position to administer the necessary civil registration arrangements.
- Section 28	Provides that the Minister may make Regulations prescribing a lesser fee for life event certificates where required for official purposes.	Consequential amendments, to be commenced following receipt of confirmation that the HSE is in a position to administer the necessary civil registration arrangements.
- Section 29(a)	Amends section 68 of the 2004 Act consequential to sections 5, 6, 7, 8 and 11 of the 2014 Act. Adds to the list of offences consequential to amendments made by the 2014 Act.	Consequential amendments, to be commenced following receipt of confirmation that the HSE is in a position to administer the necessary civil registration arrangements.
- Section 29(c)	Adds to the list of penalties consequential to amendments made by the 2014 Act.	Consequential amendments, to be commenced following receipt of confirmation that the HSE is in a position to administer the necessary civil registration arrangements.
- Section 30(a)	Amends the First Schedule of the 2004 Act by deleting "Age next birthday".	To be commenced following receipt of confirmation that the HSE is in a position to administer the necessary civil registration arrangements.
- Section 31		
- Section 32		
- Section 33		
- Section 34		

Free Travel Scheme Data

1252. Deputy Thomas P. Broughan asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the estimated full year cost of increasing the budget for the free travel scheme in 2019 by 10%, 12% and 15%, respectively; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25246/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):

Based on an expenditure of €90 million on the Free Travel Scheme in 2018 the costings sought by the Deputy are detailed in the following table:

Increase	Cost
10%	€9m
12%	€10.8m
15%	€13.5m

These costs are on a full year basis.

Ministerial Meetings

1253. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the representations made to her by the equine and related industries in the past 12 months seeking alterations to or derogation from the Organisation of Working Time Act 1997 and its associated regulations; the way in which she plans to respond to these representations; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25364/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): As the Deputy is no doubt aware, the Organisation of Working Time Act 1997 (the OWTA) provides for statutory rights for employees in relation to work breaks and rest, maximum working time and holidays. The Act transposes the EU Working Time Directive – Directive 2003/88/ EC. The purpose of the Directive is to establish minimum health and safety requirements for the organisation of working time for employees. The Directive provides for limited derogations from some of its provisions in certain circumstances. These derogations were, for the most part, transposed into national legislation via the OWTA.

Representations have been made to me from the Irish Racehorse Trainers Association, Horse Racing Ireland and from my colleague the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine. The representations raised the issue of the applicability of the Working Time Directive and the Act to the horse racing sector and in particular the derogations that may apply.

While the Directive sets down limits on the time that workers can work without rest breaks, it does allow some limited derogations from some of its provisions under certain circumstances. However, the Directive requires that the derogations in question are conditional on the employee receiving ‘equivalent compensatory rest’. This means that the employee’s statutory rest breaks may be postponed to a later time but they must be given to the employee as soon as possible thereafter and within a reasonable period of time.

The Labour Court, in a determination earlier this year, found in one particular case that an employer in the horse racing industry was not entitled to avail of certain derogations from the working time legislation. I am aware of the concern that exists in the horse racing industry arising from the Labour Court ruling. I appreciate that the working time rules present particular challenges for the industry. However, as Minister with responsibility for employment rights policy, I am equally conscious of the need to protect the health and safety of employees.

In response to the representations made to me, I obtained the legal advice of the Attorney General as to what options, if any, might be available to me to clarify the derogations available under the Directive in relation to the horse racing sector. I have also met with representatives of employers in the sector as well as representatives of employees and heard their views on the

particular characteristics of the industry in the context of the working time legislation. My officials have met with officials of the Department of Agriculture Food and the Marine and they are continuing to engage with them on the issue.

I am currently considering the Attorney General's advice and the views of the various parties involved in this sensitive and complex matter. My aim is to ensure that employers have the flexibilities they need to run successful and employment-rich businesses, within the derogations permitted by the Directive as interpreted by the Court of Justice of the European Union, and that the employees have quality jobs where their employment rights are fully protected.

It is important to note that an appeal against the Labour Court ruling is pending before the Circuit Court. I am very conscious of the need to avoid taking any action that might be seen to interfere in the judicial domain. Therefore, it would be inappropriate for me to comment any further.

Departmental Programmes

1254. Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the funding being provided to organisations (details supplied) under the Ability programme. [25382/18]

1260. Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of applicants for funding under the Ability programme. [25464/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1254 and 1260 together.

Ability is a new, pre-activation programme for young people with disabilities (aged 15 - 29) designed to assist participants in their transition from school to further education and employment. This will be undertaken using person-centred, case management approaches that support participants to identify and follow progression pathways based on both their needs and their potential. The programme is being managed by Pobal on behalf of the Department, and it will be delivered by national, regional or local organisations from around the country that have experience of working with people with a disability.

Along with my colleague, Minister McGrath, I was happy to announce the Ability programme funding on 1 June. The programme seeks to support young people with disabilities, who are able to, and want to work, to navigate their individual transition period into employment and I welcome the roll out of the services to be provided by the various organisations over the next three years.

Ability will be funded under the ESF Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning (PEIL) operational programme, 2014-2020 (PEIL, 2014 – 20) and the Irish Exchequer. There has been a significant level of interest in the Ability programme, with 59 applications received. Initially it was expected that funding for the programme would amount to some €10 million over a three year period. However, given the quality of the proposals received, enhanced funding has been put in place of around €16 million to support all 27 projects based on the funding level recommended by Pobal. Non-project spending costs associated with management and evaluation of the programme will also arise.

I understand that Pobal have been in contact with the relevant organisations in order to make administrative arrangements. The information on funding amounts by organisation, as

Questions - Written Answers

requested by the Deputy, is presented in tabular form.

Organisation	Funding recommendation
Ak Inspired Ability Company Limited By Guarantee	€531,176
Blossom Ireland Community Inclusion	€725,520
Central Remedial Clinic, CRC	€694,876
Cill Dara Ar Aghaidh Cuideachta Faoi Theorainn Rathaiochta	€264,421
Co Wexford Community Workshop (New Ross) Company Limited By Guarantee	€602,242
Cope Foundation	€614,044
Down Syndrome Ireland	€742,000
Dublin City University	€534,878
Dublin South City Partnership Company Limited By Guarantee	€650,583
Fingal Leader Partnership Company Limited By Guarantee	€230,500
Forum Connemara Company Limited By Guarantee	€724,583
I.W.A. Company Limited By Guarantee	€659,343
Ird Duhallow Company Limited By Guarantee	€749,905
Knockanrawley Resource Centre	€423,625
Limerick Youth Service	€514,776
Northside Partnership Company Limited By Guarantee	€730,000
Offaly Integrated Local Development Company Limited By Guarantee	€570,853
Peter Bradley Foundation Company Limited By Guarantee	€720,000
Roscommon Integrated Development Company Limited By Guarantee	€633,919
Specialisterne Ireland Company Limited By Guarantee	€688,900
St. Cronans Association Company Limited By Guarantee	€323,185
The Blanchardstown Area Partnership Company Limited By Guarantee	€560,277
Tipperary Regional Youth Service Company Limited By Guarantee	€493,845
Walkinstown Association for People with an Intellectual Disability Company Limited by Guarantee	€640,848
Walkinstown Green Social Enterprises Limited	€430,175
West Cork Development Partnership Company Limited By Guarantee	€565,093
Wexford Local Development	€596,123

I hope this clarifies the issue for the Deputy.

Pension Provisions

1255. Deputy John Lahart asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the efforts are being made to address issues in relation to a pension scheme (details sup-

plied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25420/18]

1256. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection her plans to meet the trustees of a pension scheme (details supplied) to discuss ongoing issues in relation to the scheme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25421/18]

1257. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection her plans to secure the pensions of members of a pension scheme (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25422/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1255 to 1257, inclusive, together.

It is the responsibility of the employer to pay pension contributions on behalf of his/her employees to Pension Trustees. In the event that a company becomes insolvent and a liquidator or receiver is appointed over the company, claims for certain arrears of pension contributions can be submitted by the liquidator or receiver for payment under the Insolvency Payments Scheme.

The Insolvency Payments Scheme operates under the Protection of Employees (Employers' Insolvency) Act 1984, as amended. The purpose of the insolvency payments scheme is to protect certain outstanding pay-related entitlements due to employees in the event of the insolvency of their employer. These include wages, holiday pay, sick pay, payment in lieu of minimum notice and certain pension contributions.

All such claims are subject to the conditions and limits laid out in the Protection of Employees (Employer's Insolvency) Act, 1984 as amended.

Defined pension claims have been received in respect of some former employees of the company referred to by the Deputy. There are complex legal issues involved on which the Department is seeking legal advice. The matter is being kept under continuing review.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Social Welfare Eligibility

1258. **Deputy Mick Barry** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if the expenses received by elected city and county councillors as distinct from their salary is reckonable as income when means testing a cohabiting couple in circumstances in which one partner is a councillor. [25427/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Department has a number of social assistance schemes where, in order to qualify for the payment, the person must satisfy a means test. These schemes include, among others, Jobseeker's Allowance, One-parent Family Payment, Disability Allowance, and the State Pension (non-contributory).

These social assistance schemes differ from the Department's social insurance schemes, which are dependent on the person's social insurance contribution record. Social assistance schemes exist to ensure that people without adequate means are provided with income supports by the State in order to alleviate poverty. The payments are means tested to ensure that the State's resources are directed towards those who are in the most need of financial support. Accordingly, social welfare legislation provides that for social assistance schemes, all cash income and any savings or property other than the family home, is assessable as means.

However vouched expenses related to the work of elected city and county councillors are not assessable as income in the means test of social assistance schemes.

Disability Allowance Eligibility

1259. Deputy Mick Barry asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection her views on a matter (details supplied) regarding the disability allowance. [25428/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): Disability allowance (DA) is a means tested scheme and means are assessed in line with the provisions specified in the relevant social welfare legislation. In summary, any income, with some exceptions, belonging to the person is assessable as means for DA purposes.

Another condition for receipt of DA is that a person has an injury, disease or physical or mental disability that has continued (or may be expected to continue for at least one year) and that as a result of this disability, is substantially restricted in undertaking work that would otherwise be suitable for a person of his/her age, experience and qualifications.

The DA scheme is structured to encourage recipients to avail of opportunities to engage in rehabilitative work where this is appropriate, either in self-employment or in insurable employment. When an individual engages in rehabilitative work, they can avail of an income disregard of €120 per week, and 50% of earnings between €120 and €350 are also disregarded, for the purpose of the means test.

Where the DA recipient commences self-employment, we require them to indicate when they are starting and the type of work involved. We also request that they keep full records of their income and expenses from the date on which the self-employment commences. This is to ensure that the appropriate evidence is available to a deciding officer to calculate the average earnings over the period most appropriate, having regard to the circumstances of each case.

Approval must first be sought from my Department in order for the work to be considered as rehabilitative. The term 'rehabilitative' is not defined in legislation and is broadly interpreted in administrative practice as including appropriate work that would be regarded as good for the person and would be expected to result in more positive outcomes in symptom levels, self-esteem, quality of life and social functioning. In all cases the recipient must forward a letter from their own doctor indicating that the work is rehabilitative.

The Make Work Pay (MWP) report for people with disabilities, published in 2017, made a number of recommendations including that the requirement that work be of a 'rehabilitative nature' for the DA earnings disregard should be dispensed with. This would mean that a report from a doctor would no longer required before commencing work and that the focus is on capacity rather than incapacity. Legislation is required to give effect to this change and is included in the Social Welfare, Pensions and Civil Registration Bill 2017.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Question No. 1260 answered with Question No. 1254.

Domiciliary Care Allowance Applications

1261. Deputy Michael McGrath asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social

Protection if an application to backdate a domiciliary care allowance to the date of birth for a child by a person (details supplied) in County Cork will be considered. [25472/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): An application for domiciliary care allowance (DCA) was received from this person on 9 February 2011 and was found eligible for the allowance. DCA is payable from the month following receipt of the application unless good cause is shown for the delay in submitting the claim, in which case backdating to a maximum of 6 months can be considered. When dealing with the application the deciding officer was not satisfied that the person concerned had indicated a good reason for the delay in claiming the payment and, as a result, the allowance was put into payment from 1st March 2011, the month after the application was received in the Department. The person concerned was given the right of appeal, if not satisfied with the decision, no appeal was lodged.

The person concerned subsequently requested a review of the decision on the 28th February 2018, seeking to have the award of DCA backdated to the date of birth. She was informed by the Deciding Officer on 21 May 2018 that a review of the application had been carried out but a revision of the original decision was not considered to be warranted.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Labour Activation Programmes Data

1262. Deputy Róisín Shortall asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if her attention has been drawn to the case of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 9 and the unsatisfactory manner in which he or she was treated by Seetec; if she has received correspondence from the person; the steps she has taken to address his or her concerns; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25541/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I can confirm for the Deputy that no formal complaint or correspondence has been received from the person referred to. Seetec have also advised my Department that no complaint has been received by them. My Department's Local Intreo Office have advised the person concerned of the Complaints Process should he wish to make a complaint.

It is a requirement of Seetec's contract with the Department that, in the first instance, they investigate any issues that may arise in respect of the service they provide. If the client remains dissatisfied having exhausted the Contractors Complaint Process, which has various levels of escalation built in, he can then seek a review which will be conducted by my Department.

All jobseekers referred to Department's activation services including those referred to the JobPath service are asked to complete an assessment of their work related skills and experience and agree a Personal Progression Plan (PPP) with their personal advisor. The PPP is an agreed set of actions between the client and the Employment Advisor; it includes the person's two primary job goals but also includes additional skills and job aspirations for the purpose of supporting the Jobseeker to progress towards full-time sustainable employment.

In the case of the individual concerned, the PPP includes 7 additional skills and competencies in addition to the two job goals.

Jobseekers are asked to sign the PPP as an indication of their agreement to the activation measures contained in the PPP. As was stated during my Department's recent appearance before the Joint Oireachtas Committee, Jobseekers are not obliged to sign a PPP, and a sanction will

not be applied for refusing to sign a PPP. However, all Jobseekers are obliged under the legislation to be genuinely seeking work and to fully engage with the activation service provided by the Department. I am happy to confirm for the Deputy that no person is coerced into signing a “contract” with Seetec.

My Department has asked Seetec to review the issue of the recording of qualifications with the person concerned. However, I can confirm that the horticultural experience was noted on the person’s Personal Progression Plan.

Youth Unemployment Measures

1263. Deputy Maurice Quinlivan asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the measures she plans to introduce to address the level of youth unemployment (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25550/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Government policy to reduce unemployment is twofold. First, through policies set out in the Action Plan for Jobs, to create an environment in which business can succeed and create jobs; and second, through Pathways to Work, to ensure that as many as possible of these new jobs and other vacancies that arise in our economy are filled by people taken from the Live Register, including young people.

Reflecting the impact of government policy, and the overall improvement in the labour market, youth unemployment continues to fall with a rate of 11.9% (32,300 persons) in May 2018 estimated by CSO, down from a peak rate of almost 32% in 2012. The actual number of young people unemployed is estimated to have peaked at 97,800 persons in late 2010. Youth unemployment figures can be expected to fall further this year in line with the continuing forecast fall in overall unemployment.

In early 2018, youth unemployment is already below the 12% target level set in Pathways to Work for 2020. Additionally, Eurostat figures indicate that the number of young people in full-time employment has grown from 197,000 in mid-2012 to 238,000 by Q.4 2017.

These trends indicate that together with improvements in the labour market and economic recovery, our approach to youth employment, which focuses in the first instance on enhancing processes and policies for assisting young unemployed people to find and secure sustainable jobs, has been relatively successful.

Under the Government’s policies to support the young unemployed, the first intervention is to provide case officer support to help newly unemployed young people find and secure sustainable jobs. There is monthly engagement with all young jobseekers by a case officer, and a Personal Progression Plan is developed to chart the steps to be taken to facilitate a return to employment, which may include further education and training or other opportunities.

For those who do not find employment, through the process just described, additional offers are provided for. Most such offers (over 70%) are in existing further education or training programmes. Others are in existing community-based employment programmes/workplace based interventions such as CE, Gateway and Tús and First Steps; or in subsidies to employers, through JobsPlus Youth. Long-term unemployed jobseekers under-25 are also referred to Job-Path, a contracted, payment-by-results employment services that provides additional resources and supports to those long-term unemployed.

The strategy document *Pathways to Work 2016 to 2020* includes some additional actions

in relation to addressing youth unemployment:

- 1) increase the relative share of workplace-based interventions (Gateway, TUS, Positive to Work etc.) for youth unemployed;
- 2) ensure the frequency of engagement with all young unemployed people is a minimum of one case officer meeting per month;
- 3) restructure the First Steps programme for young unemployed people to improve take-up by offering a higher level of support to jobseekers and employers
- 4) implement the Defence Forces Skills for Life employment support programme.

Each of these actions is either ongoing or has been completed.

I will shortly be introducing a new work experience programme targeted specifically at young jobseekers who are long-term unemployed or who face significant barriers to gaining employment. The new Youth Employment Support Scheme (YESS) will provide them with the opportunity to learn basic work and social skills in a supportive environment while on a work placement. Operational details are currently being finalised.

I am satisfied that the current policy approach will continue to address youth unemployment and support further improvements in the labour market situation for young people.

Departmental Budgets

1264. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection her Department's capital allocation in each of the years 2019 to 2023; and the areas to which funds will be allocated in each of those years. [25570/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Department's capital allocation for the years 2019 to 2022 is outlined in the table below. However, this is subject to ongoing review in the context of the annual Estimates process. The 2023 capital allocation will be set out in the context of the 2019 Estimates.

The capital allocation will be split across three subheads i.e. A.2.v Office Equipment and External IT Services, A.2.vi Office Premises Expenses and A.2.ix eGovernment Related Projects. It is intended that the allocation will primarily assist the Department in delivering additional IT modernisation and allow for the significant refurbishment of the Department's Áras Mhic Dhíarmada and other buildings in the coming years.

2019	2020	2021	2022
€14m	€15m	€16m	€17m

Unemployment Data

1265. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the rate of jobless households here; the way in which this compares to the EU average; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25582/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): According to the Eurostat Labour Force Survey, in 2017 there were 171.22 million households in the EU (excluding households composed solely of students or solely of inactive people aged 65

and over). Of these, some 28.18 million households (16.5% of the total) were jobless - that is, no adult in the household was working.

For Ireland, the total number of relevant households was 1,489,600, and of these some 234,100 (15.7% of the total) were jobless.

Although the figure for Ireland has fallen from a high of 23% in 2012 (when it was significantly above the EU average of 19%) as a result of the economic recovery, government remains concerned about aspects of household joblessness that go beyond the standard measures of unemployment and receipt of jobseekers' payments. Relevant groups, not normally considered to be unemployed, include economically inactive lone parents, people with disabilities, and the adult dependants of unemployed people, all of whom might benefit from closer attachment to employment and the labour market. A range of policy reforms has been taken affecting these groups, and further reforms are being considered in consultation with representative bodies for those involved. These policy developments were set out in an Action Plan for Jobless Households, which was published by my department in September 2017.

State Pension (Contributory) Applications

1266. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when a person (details supplied) can receive the State pension (contributory) in view of his or her particular circumstances; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25591/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The person concerned applied for standard state pension (contributory) on 13 April 2018. According to the records of the Department, the person has a total of 317 full-rate paid social insurance contributions. As one of the qualifying conditions for state pension (contributory) requires a social insurance record of at least 520 full-rate paid contributions, the person concerned does not qualify and was informed in writing of this decision on 25 May 2018.

The person concerned was in receipt of illness benefit until their 66th birthday, as illness benefit is payable to age 66. If the person thinks they may have had an underlying entitlement to invalidity pension for part of the period during which they received illness benefit payments they should make a retrospective application for it. An application form has been sent to the person concerned. Recipients of invalidity pension immediately prior to their 66th birthday are entitled to transfer to state pension (contributory).

As the person concerned has reached age 66, they should apply for state pension (non-contributory) without delay. An application form has been sent directly to the person concerned for completion and should be returned to State pension (non-contributory) section, Social Services Office, College Road, Sligo F91 T384.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Public Services Card Data

1267. Deputy Aindrias Moynihan asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the procedure in place in order that a person that does not have a birth certificate or that may not have had his or her birth registered may apply for a public services card; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25595/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):

SAFE registration is about the verification of identity and the verification of the information that the Department already holds on its records, following which a Public Services Card may be issued.

Where a person presents for SAFE registration, their record is retrieved from the Department's systems using the name and date of birth. Following this, where the person claims to have been born in the State, their birth registration record is searched for on the General Register Office system.

It may occur that a person's record cannot be located there. There are several reasons why this may occur. For example, the birth may have been registered using slightly different details, the person may be adopted, or the birth may not have been registered at all.

In such cases, the person is asked to contact the relevant registrar and obtain a birth certificate.

Where a person can subsequently state that his/her birth was not registered, they should provide all documentation that they have in relation to their birth details and identity. Where a baptism certificate is available, this should be provided.

All information is then considered by the Department and a decision made as to whether the person's identity and details may be verified.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Social Welfare Benefits Data

1268. Deputy Thomas P. Broughan asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the estimated cost of increasing the 85% Christmas bonus for social welfare recipients to 100%; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25600/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Last December, an 85% Bonus was paid to some 1.2 million long-term social welfare recipients, including pensioners, people with disabilities, carers, lone parents and the long-term unemployed, at a cost of €218.6 million.

The cost of a 100% Bonus is estimated at circa €257 million in 2018. As was the case in previous years where a Bonus was subsequently paid (2014 to 2017 inclusive), there is no provision in the 2018 Revised Estimates for the payment (at any rate) of a Christmas Bonus in 2018.

Any decision taken regarding the payment of a Bonus in 2018 will have to be consistent with the legal requirements set out in the Fiscal Responsibility Acts 2012 and 2013, and within the context of achieving the targets set for Ireland by the EU rules.

Social Insurance Data

1269. Deputy Joan Burton asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of persons born in 1998, 1999, 2000 and 2001 who had reckonable earnings for social insurance purposes within gross income groups (details supplied) based on P35 returns for 2017, in tabular form. [25635/18]

1270. Deputy Joan Burton asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protec-

Questions - Written Answers

tion the number of persons born in 1997, 1998, 1999 and 2000 who had reckonable earnings for social insurance purposes within gross income groups (details supplied) based on P35 returns for 2016, in tabular form. [25636/18]

1271. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of persons born in 1996, 1997, 1998 and 1999 who had reckonable earnings for social insurance purposes within gross income groups (details supplied) based on P35 returns for 2015, in tabular form. [25637/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1269 to 1271, inclusive, together.

The following tables show the number of persons who had reckonable earnings for Social insurance purposes only within the bands requested by the Deputy. Reckonable earnings generally refers to income derived from insurable employment (i.e. employment income) which is taxed under PAYE. Those paying PRSI on reckonable earnings are referred to as employed contributors. PRSI contributions paid on reckonable earnings are recorded under one of the employment Classes A, B, C, D, E, H and J. The Department does not hold information on gross income.

2015 Reckonable Earnings

		.01-5,000	5,001-10,000	10,001-15,000	15,001-20,000	20,001 and higher
Year of Birth	People	N	N	N	N	N
1996	38,233	20,356	10,942	4,543	1,705	687
1997	27,508	19,787	5,756	1,389	406	170
1998	16,544	13,431	2,432	452	159	70
1999	7,244	6,205	826	131	54	28
Total	89,529	59,779	19,956	6,515	2,324	955
						2016 Reckonable Earnings
		.01-5,000	5,001-10,000	10,001-15,000	15,001-20,000	20,001 and higher
Year of Birth	People	N	N	N	N	N
1997	43,600	21,758	12,544	5,917	2,404	977
1998	31,818	22,519	6,691	1,773	595	240
1999	19,750	15,983	2,988	528	160	91
2000	8,319	7,150	927	172	48	22
Total	103,487	67,410	23,150	8,390	3,207	1,330
						2017 Reckonable Earnings
		.01-5,000	5,001-10,000	10,001-15,000	15,001-20,000	20,001 and higher
Year of Birth	People	N	N	N	N	N
1998	43,211	19,581	13,289	6,462	2,735	1,144
1999	29,888	20,074	7,134	1,893	541	246
2000	17,436	13,710	2,991	540	145	50
2001	7,877	6,799	859	153	51	15
Total	98,412	60,164	24,273	9,048	3,472	1,455

2017 figures are based on the most up to date information provided by the Office of the Revenue Commissioners.

Disability Allowance Data

1272. Deputy Michael Healy-Rae asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the reason an application for a carer to collect disability allowance on behalf of a person (details supplied) was refused; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25687/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): Except in certain exceptional circumstances, disability allowance (DA) is not payable for any period in respect of which the claimant is resident outside of the State. In all circumstances, DA recipients must inform the Department that they are intending to leave the State.

For control reasons, the Department has decided that the person concerned is not authorised to appoint an agent on their DA as they have previously collected DA payments while not resident in the state.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

EU Data

1273. Deputy Michael McGrath asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the European Union, EU, fines paid in each of the years 2015 to 2017, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25732/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): No fines were imposed by the EU nor have any EU fines been paid by Ireland in relation to the areas for which the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection has responsibility during the period from 2015 to 2017.

River Basin Management Plans

1274. Deputy Charlie McConalogue asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the 190 priority catchments identified by the Environmental Protection Agency, EPA, in consultation with other Government agencies under the Sustainability Support and Advisory Programme to promote on-farm sustainability best practice to farmers in tabular form. [24273/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The River Basin Management Plan for Ireland 2018-2021, which was published in April 2018, sets out the actions that Ireland will take to improve water quality and achieve ‘good’ ecological status in water bodies (rivers, lakes, estuaries and coastal waters) by 2027. Ireland is required to produce river basin management plans under the Water Framework Directive.

The River Basin Management Plan for Ireland 2018-2021, which was published in April 2018, sets out the actions that Ireland will take to improve water quality and achieve ‘good’ ecological status in water bodies (rivers, lakes, estuaries and coastal waters) by 2027. Ireland is required to produce river basin management plans under the Water Framework Directive.

During the development of this Plan, a prioritisation exercise was undertaken by the local authorities, the EPA and other stakeholders to identify those water bodies that require immediate action within this plan cycle to 2021. During this catchment characterisation, the EPA

identified those water bodies adjudged to be either at risk of not achieving their objectives, or under review.

Led jointly by the EPA and the Local Authority Waters and Communities Office, a collaborative workshop process involving senior local authority personnel and all relevant stakeholders was set up to identify, at a regional level, those water bodies that should be prioritised for action during this planning cycle. This process was based on the priorities outlined in the Plan, on the evidence from the characterisation process and on the data and knowledge of public authority personnel. The outcome of this prioritisation process was the selection of 190 areas for action across our River Basin District. Within these 190 areas, a total of 726 water bodies were selected for initial actions during this RBMP cycle.

The actions involve multidisciplinary and cross-agency approaches. One such action is the creation of an Agricultural Sustainability Support and Advisory Programme. The Programme involves the provision of 30 new sustainability advisors who will work collaboratively with farmers in prioritised areas for action, providing advice and support which will enable them to contribute to the protection and enhancement of water quality.

Details of the 190 areas for action are set out in Appendix 2 of the River Basin Management Plan, and are also available on the catchments website at: <https://www.catchments.ie/areas-for-action/>.

Irish Water Data

1275. Deputy Thomas P. Broughan asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if his Department has requested Irish Water to restart a water meter installation programme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24391/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): On 21 May 2018, I published the Water Services Policy Statement 2018-2025 following its approval by Government. 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:http://www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/publications/files/water_services_policy_statement_2018-2025_0.pdf. The Policy Statement supports the promotion of water conservation and water resource management as an important element of water services policy that is to be reflected in strategic investment planning by Irish Water. For the period of the Policy Statement, this will involve the prioritisation of multifaceted programmes around leak detection and repair, network improvements, cost effective metering, public awareness campaigns and funding to fix customer side leaks. This policy statement was informed by the 2017 Report of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on the Future Funding of Domestic Water Services which was approved by both Houses of the Oireachtas and which includes a number of recommendations in relation to the continued use of metering to support water conservation, to reduce leakages and to ensure compliance with the European Union Water Framework Directive, as opposed to for revenue raising purposes. The Water Services Policy Statement is consistent with this position. Within 3 months of publication of the Water Services Policy Statement, Irish Water must prepare a Strategic Funding Plan setting out its proposals for operational and capital expenditure on all aspects of the development and delivery of public water services, including conservation and water resource management. Once finalised and approved by me as Minister, the Strategic Funding Plan will be laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas and will inform Irish Water's submissions to the Commission for Regulation of Utilities which will consider the efficiency of investment proposals. Ultimately

this will feed into annual Exchequer decisions on spending.

Local Authority Rates

1276. Deputy Róisín Shortall asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the steps he is taking to help reduce the cost of local authority rates on businesses. [24442/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):

Local authorities are under a statutory obligation to levy rates on any property used for commercial purposes, in accordance with the details entered in the valuation lists prepared by the independent Commissioner of Valuation under the Valuation Acts 2001 to 2015. The Commissioner of Valuation has responsibility for valuation matters. The Annual Rate on Valuation (ARV), which is applied to the valuation of each property determined by the Valuation Office to obtain the amount payable in rates, is decided by the elected members of each local authority in the annual budget and its determination is a reserved function.

Rates income is a very important contribution to the cost of services provided by local authorities such as roads, public lighting, development control, parks and open spaces. Locally elected members adopt the annual rate on valuation they consider necessary in order to provide the required services.

My Department has in recent years requested local authorities to exercise restraint in setting ARVs and they have responded positively in this regard. The national average ARV has not changed significantly in recent years. The national average ARV decreased slightly each year from 2010 to 2015 and has increased slightly each year from 2016 to 2018.

As provided for under section 66 of the Local Government Act 2001, local authorities may decide to offer assistance or money in kind in order to promote the interests of the local community, which includes, *inter alia*, the economic or general development of the administrative area (or part of it) of the local authority concerned. Also, local authorities work closely with ratepayers experiencing difficulty in the payment of commercial rates. In this regard, local authorities facilitate the payment of commercial rates by instalments, and work with businesses to put in place flexible payment options that reflect capacity to pay.

Furthermore, my Department has developed legislative proposals to modernise and consolidate the legislation governing commercial rates, and last year the Government approved the drafting of a Rates Bill. Among the measures included in the General Scheme of the Bill are provisions to allow a local authority to introduce rates alleviation schemes to support the implementation of policy objectives, including: local economic and community plans; objectives contained in Development Plans and Local Area Plans; and national planning policies. The Bill is currently with the Attorney General's office for drafting, with a view to its introduction as soon as possible.

Referendum Data

1277. Deputy Catherine Martin asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if there have been changes to the indicative timetable for the holding of referendums (details supplied) agreed on 26 September 2017. [24787/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Gov-

ernment (Deputy John Paul Phelan): The Government announced on 26 September 2017 that it had agreed an indicative timetable for the holding of a number of referendums on proposals for amendments to the Constitution arising from the work of the Citizens' Assembly and the Convention on the Constitution.

In this context, my Department will be responsible for bringing forward appropriate Constitution Amendment Bills on reducing the voting age to 16 and on extending the franchise at Presidential elections to Irish citizens resident outside the State. These referendums will address two of the recommendations of the Convention on the Constitution. Subject to the passage of the Constitution Amendment Bills by the Houses of the Oireachtas, it is proposed that these referendums will be held on the same day as the local and European elections which will take place in late May 2019.

The indicative timetable also included the holding of a plebiscite in October 2018 on directly elected executive mayors. The issues arising in that regard are currently under consideration.

Planning Issues

1278. Deputy Jim O'Callaghan asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if he can require those embarking on a de facto new build to contribute to a ring-fenced fund to repair damage to the roads caused by such construction; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24296/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Under sections 48 and 49 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, planning authorities may levy development contributions in respect of public infrastructure and facilities benefiting development in the area that is provided, or intended to be provided, by or on behalf of the local authority. Examples of such infrastructure and facilities include roads, footpaths, public lighting, open spaces etc. My role as Minister is to provide the necessary legislative and policy framework governing development contribution schemes which are operated by planning authorities.

The basis for the determination of a development contribution is set out in a development contribution scheme adopted by the elected members of a local authority, and planning authorities may make one or more schemes in respect of different parts of its functional area. In addition to the terms of the scheme, planning authorities may require the payment of a special contribution in respect of a particular development where specific exceptional costs not covered by a scheme are incurred by any local authority in respect of public infrastructure and facilities which benefit the proposed development. The adoption of these schemes is a reserved function of the locally elected members of each planning authority, and it is a matter for the members to determine the level of contribution and the types of development to which they will apply, and the expenditure of the contributions received within the confines of the scheme conditions.

Separately, section 34(1) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 provides that planning authorities may attach conditions to a grant of planning permission. Section 34(4) lists specific conditions that may be attached, but this is expressly without prejudice to the generality of the power to attach conditions set out in subsection (1).

The interpretation and application of the relevant legislation is a matter for planning authorities in the first instance, An Bord Pleanála on appeal, and ultimately the Courts. The decision as to whether to grant a planning application, with or without conditions, is a matter for the relevant planning authority or An Bord Pleanála as appropriate and I have no role in relation to

the matter. Any decision to attach a condition to a grant of permission requiring a contribution for the repair of any damage to the roads caused by such construction is similarly a matter for the relevant planning authority.

Housing Issues

1279. Deputy Seán Barrett asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if legislation is planned to cease the practice of developers advertising new homes with price on application and no published price (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24347/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): As I previously outlined in my reply to Questions Nos. 594 and 599 of 15 May 2018, I have no function in relation to the regulation of how property websites and advertisements for properties for sale display information, including whether they provide specific asking prices or not.

I have no plans to introduce legislation in relation to the assignment of conditions of planning permission regarding the advertisement of new houses or apartment developments without a price.

Local Authority Housing

1280. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the amount of land available for the provision of local authority housing by local authority area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24410/18]

1281. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of local authority units of accommodation under construction by local authority area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24411/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1280 and 1281 together.

The active management of the publicly-owned housing land bank is part of a range of complementary actions being progressed under the Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness, designed to accelerate and increase housing output. To this end, details of some 1,700 hectares of land in local authority and Housing Agency ownership were published on the Rebuilding Ireland Housing Land Map, with the potential to deliver some 42,500 homes nationally. These mapped sites can be viewed at the following link: <http://rebuildingireland.ie/news/rebuilding-ireland-land-map/>.

In addition to this mapping exercise, all local authorities, have been requested to prepare Strategic Development and Management Plans for housing lands in their ownership, with particular emphasis on prioritising those sites with the greatest potential to deliver housing at scale, in the short to medium term.

From a longer-term strategic perspective, as part of Project Ireland 2040, the Government announced its intention to establish a new National Regeneration and Development Agency, which will have a role in managing the State's wider publicly-owned land bank to ensure that overall development needs, including housing, are met. The new Agency will work closely with local authorities, Government Departments, Agencies and other State and semi-State bodies to

secure the best use of public lands and ensure the delivery on the objectives of the National Planning Framework and the National Development Plan.

In respect of the number of local authority houses under construction, this is set out in the Social Housing Construction Status Report which is published on a quarterly basis. The report covering the period up to end Quarter 4 2017 was published on 19 April 2018 and is available on the Rebuilding Ireland website at the following link: <http://rebuildingireland.ie/news/minister-murphy-publishes-social-housing-construction-status-report-q4-2017/>. The report provides project details of the social housing construction pipeline in place at end-2017 for all local authorities, including those being delivered in partnership with approved housing bodies.

The report shows a pipeline of over 13,400 social homes, a substantial increase on the 8,430 homes in the pipeline a year earlier. At end 2017, almost 2,600 social homes were completed, with another 3,650 homes under construction, 1,900 homes about to go on site and the remaining 5,300 homes progressing through the various stages of planning, design and procurement.

Housing Assistance Payment Eligibility

1282. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government his plans to extend the homeless HAP scheme to additional local authority areas; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24412/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The Homeless HAP Place Finder Service is a targeted support for homeless households who are finding it difficult to secure HAP tenancies. The function of the Service is to work with homeless households to identify potential rental properties and support them to secure the tenancies. The Place Finder Service has been successfully utilised by the Dublin Regional Homeless Executive (DRHE) across the Dublin local authorities since February 2015, with more than 3,000 households currently being supported by the Homeless HAP scheme. A similar service began operating in Cork City in 2017.

In order to further assist homeless households to exit emergency accommodation, since January 2018, the Homeless HAP Place Finder Service can now be made available in each of the 31 local authority areas. I have provided sanction to local authorities to recruit the necessary personnel required to operate an appropriate Place Finder Service in their areas. To date 14 local authorities have expressed an interest in making this support available to homeless households. I also provided local authorities with the capacity to pay deposits and advance rental payments on behalf households in emergency homeless accommodation or who are at immediate risk of entering emergency accommodation in order to secure accommodation via the HAP scheme. To qualify for these specific additional supports available to homeless households, a household must have been determined by the relevant local authority to be homeless within the meaning of section 2 of the Housing Act 1988. The operation of local homeless services, including the Place Finder Service, is a matter for each local authority.

Aside from the specific Place Finder supports available to homeless households who could benefit from HAP, every local authority has discretion to exercise flexibility and agree to a HAP payment, up to 20% (up to 50% in the Dublin local authority areas only) above the maximum rent limit for that household type where it is necessary, because of local rental market conditions.

Homeless Accommodation Provision

1283. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of family hubs that are to be provided in Dublin in 2018; the number of families that the hubs will accommodate on an emergency basis; the planned delivery dates for each of the family hubs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24413/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): My Department's role in relation to homelessness involves the provision of a national framework of policy, legislation and funding to underpin the role of housing authorities in addressing homelessness at local level. Statutory responsibility in relation to the provision of accommodation and associated services for homeless persons rests with individual housing authorities.

Family hubs offer family living arrangements with a greater level of stability than is possible in hotel accommodation, with the capacity to provide appropriate play-space, cooking and laundry facilities, communal recreation space, while move-on options to long-term independent tenancies are identified and secured.

There are currently 20 family hubs in operation, 17 of which are in Dublin. Two additional facilities will open in Dublin in June and August respectively. This will bring the total number of hubs operating in Dublin to 19 with a combined capacity of over 500 family units.

My Department is working closely with the Dublin Region Homeless Executive (DRHE) on the development of further family hubs. A range of options are being pursued by the DRHE, aimed at introducing at least 400 further units of accommodation for families in the Dublin region. While it is not possible at this point to provide precise delivery dates for these facilities, every effort will continue to be made to secure delivery as expeditiously as possible.

Property Registration

1284. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if he will address a matter (details supplied) regarding property registration; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24415/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Under the Registration of Deeds and Title Act 2006, the Property Registration Authority (PRA) was established as and from 4 November 2006. The PRA replaces the Registrar of Deeds and Titles as the registering authority in relation to property registration in Ireland and, subject to the above Act, is independent in the performance of its functions.

Arrangements have been put in place by all bodies under the aegis of my Department to facilitate the provision of information directly to members of the Oireachtas. The contact email address for the Property Registration Authority is reps@prai.ie.

I have been advised that a request for information relating to this question was received by the PRA on 31 May 2018 and a response was issued on 5 June 2018.

Commercial Rates

1285. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government further to Parliamentary question No. 2074 of 11 September 2017, if his attention has been drawn to the wide variation in the capacity of local authorities to collect commercial rates; if his Department has considered offering assistance to local authorities to improve their capacity to maximise the important revenue stream to improve local services; and if he will make a state-

ment on the matter. [24464/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):

Local authorities are under a statutory obligation to levy rates on any property used for commercial purposes in accordance with the details entered in the valuation lists prepared by the independent Commissioner of Valuation pursuant to the Valuation Acts 2001 to 2015. The levying and collection of rates are matters for each individual local authority.

Commercial rates form an important element of the funding of all local authorities. However, the legislative basis for the levying of rates is spread over a number of enactments, some dating back to the 19th century. Many of the provisions are outdated and not suitable for business trends in the modern era. My Department is developing proposals for a consolidated Rates Bill to modernise and consolidate the legislation in this area. In this regard, the Government approved the drafting of a Rates Bill in April 2017. It is currently with the Office of Parliamentary Counsel for drafting, with a view to its introduction as soon as possible.

The Debt Management Project Implementation Board, on which my Department and the Local Authority Sector were represented, was established by the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform in February 2015, to progress the recommendations of the Debt Management Review, which was published in 2014. As part of this process, the local authorities undertook a range of work to improve collection levels including;

- Setting targets for reduction of arrears of commercial rates in each local authority;
- Improved reporting of rates debts in local authority financial statements;
- Introduction of strengthened policies relating to debt collection; and
- The development and rollout of a training and education programme.

As part of this process, the local authority sector prepared a business case for stronger enforcement powers in the collection of commercial rates. This business case was endorsed by the Project Board. Provision for strengthened enforcement powers for local authorities is included in the Rates Bill currently being drafted.

Planning Issues

1286. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if there is provision to deviate from the terms of the original planning permission in regard to the water and waste water conditions set out in planning permission in situations in which an extension of duration is applied for and granted to a planning permission; if Irish Water has a role with respect to variations; if so, the nature of the role; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24485/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):

Section 42 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, relating to the extension of the duration of a planning permission, does not provide for the making of any substantive change to a permission, other than the period during which the permission has effect. Apart from conditions relating to the giving of adequate security for the satisfactory completion of the development concerned, there is no provision in that enactment for attaching conditions to a decision to extend the duration of a permission or for consultation with third parties in the matter.

Residential Tenancies Board

1287. Deputy Niamh Smyth asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government his views on a case; the options open to persons (details supplied) in this matter; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24509/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):

The Residential Tenancies Board (RTB) was established as an independent statutory body under the Residential Tenancies Acts 2014-2016 to operate a national tenancy registration system and to resolve disputes between landlords and tenants.

Where there is a dispute between a landlord and tenant in respect of a failure of either party to fulfil their obligations under the Acts, or a dispute in relation to whether or not a tenancy exists, the dispute may be referred to the RTB for resolution.

Due to the quasi-judicial role of the RTB, it would be inappropriate for me, as Minister, to comment on or to interfere in, the specifics of any case.

Tenant Purchase Scheme Eligibility

1288. Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government his plans to expand the local authority tenant purchase scheme beyond three bedroom houses; if two bedroom properties and larger houses will be included; and if there is discretion allowed for local authorities. [24538/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The Tenant (Incremental) Purchase Scheme came into operation on 1 January 2016. The Scheme is open to eligible tenants, including joint tenants, of local authority houses that are available for sale under the Scheme. To be eligible, tenants must meet certain criteria, including having a minimum reckonable income of €15,000 per annum and having been in receipt of social housing support for at least one year.

The Housing (Sale of Local Authority Houses) Regulations 2015 governing the Scheme provide for a number of specified classes of houses to be excluded from sale, including houses provided to local authorities under Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, houses specifically designed for older persons, group Traveller housing and houses provided to facilitate people with disabilities transferring from institutional care to community-based living.

Local authorities may, within the provisions of the Regulations, exclude certain houses which, in the opinion of the authority, should not be sold for reasons such as proper stock or estate management. It is a matter for each individual local authority to administer the Scheme in its operational area in line with the over-arching provisions of the governing legislation for the scheme, and in a manner appropriate to its housing requirements.

In line with the commitment given in *Rebuilding Ireland*, a review of the first 12 months of the Scheme's operation has been undertaken. The review has incorporated analysis of comprehensive data received from local authorities regarding the operation of the scheme during 2016 and a wide-ranging public consultation process which took place in 2017 and saw submissions received from individuals, elected representatives and organisations.

The review is now complete and a full report has been prepared setting out findings and recommendations. In finalising the report some further consultation was necessary and due

consideration had to be given to possible implementation arrangements. These matters are now almost completed and I expect to be in a position to publish the outcome of the review shortly.

Local Electoral Area Boundary Committee Report

1289. Deputy Lisa Chambers asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government when the local electoral boundary review will be published; and the date for publication. [24545/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy John Paul Phelan): I established two independent Local Electoral Area Boundary Committees on 13 December 2017 to review and make recommendations on local electoral areas having regard to, among other things, the results of Census 2016 as well as the commitment to consider reducing the size of territorially large local electoral areas as set out in A Programme for Partnership Government (May 2016). The reviews are to be completed well in advance of the next local elections which are scheduled for mid-2019. In this regard, the Committees are tasked with reporting to me within six months of their establishment, that is by tomorrow 13 June 2018, after which the necessary arrangements will be made to publish their reports.

Programme for Government Implementation

1290. Deputy Micheál Martin asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the status of the implementation of the programme for Partnership Government as it applies to his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24578/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): My Department is responsible for over 70 commitments under the Programme for a Partnership Government.

Progress reports on the implementation of the Programme are published on a regular basis by the Department of the Taoiseach. The most recent progress report was published in December 2017 and can be accessed at the following link:

https://www.taoiseach.gov.ie/eng/Taoiseach_and_Government/Programmes_for_Government/Programme_for_a_Partnership_Government_Progress_Report_-_December_2017.pdf.

I expect a further report, providing a comprehensive update on progress since May 2017 for all Departments, to be published shortly. In terms of the commitments under my Department's remit, this will set out progress in relation to a range of areas, including:

- the commitment in Budget 2018 of €1.9 billion for investment in housing during 2018;
- 7,065 new homes brought into the active social housing stock last year;
- 17,916 new HAP tenancies established in 2017, exceeding the target by almost 3,000;
- in excess of 4,700 exits from homelessness into sustainable tenancies in 2017;
- the launch of Project Ireland 2040 earlier this year - a twenty year spatial strategy backed up by a ten-year, €116 billion capital investment programme.

1291. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government when phase two energy refit funding will be allocated to local authorities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24598/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The Energy Efficiency Retrofitting Programme, which commenced in 2013 to improve the energy efficiency and comfort levels in local authority homes, is being implemented in a number of phases. Funding of some €115.7 million has been provided from 2013 to the end of 2017 to improve almost 64,000 local authority homes, benefitting those at risk of fuel poverty and making a significant contribution to Ireland's carbon emissions reduction targets and energy reduction targets for 2020.

Phase 1 of the Programme focused on providing attic/roof insulation and the less intrusive cavity wall insulation and is expected to be completed this year. Phase 2 will focus on the external fabric upgrade of those social housing units with solid/hollow block wall construction and has been successfully piloted by Westmeath and Fingal County Councils.

My Department has recently contacted all local authorities seeking details of their work proposals under both phases of the Programme in 2018. Following analysis of these proposals, funding allocations will be issued to local authorities and Phase 2 will be rolled out nationally. As Phase 2 attracts co-funding at a rate of 50% under the European Regional Development Fund 2014 – 2020 it must be implemented in accordance with all relevant EU regulations and the management and control procedures, including procurement, as required by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

Rent Pressure Zones

1292. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government his plans to extend the rent pressure zone to Dundalk in view of the crisis in rental costs and student accommodation costs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24659/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Section 24A of the Residential Tenancies Act 2004, as amended, provides that the Housing Agency, in consultation with housing authorities, may make a proposal to the Minister that an area should be considered as a Rent Pressure Zone. Following receipt of such a proposal, the Minister requests the Director of the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB) to conduct an assessment of the area to establish whether or not it meets the criteria for designation and to report to the Minister on whether the area should be designated as a Rent Pressure Zone. For the purpose of the Act, 'area' is defined as either the administrative area of a housing authority or a local electoral area (LEA) within the meaning of section 2 of the Local Government Act 2001. There is no provision for any other type of area to be designated as a Rent Pressure Zone.

For an area to be designated as a Rent Pressure Zone, it must satisfy the following criteria set out in section 24A(4) of the Residential Tenancies Act 2004 (as inserted by section 36 of the Planning and Development (Housing) and Residential Tenancies Act 2016):

- (i) The annual rate of rent inflation in the area must have been 7% or more in four of the last six quarters; and
- (ii) The average rent for tenancies registered in the area with the RTB in the last quarter must be above the average national rent (the National Standardised Rent in the RTB's Rent Index Report) in the last quarter (€1,054 per month in Q4 2017).

As the average rent in both of the Dundalk LEAs, as set out in the Table below, is currently below the national average rent, they do not qualify for consideration to be designated as a RPZ. However, the Housing Agency continues to monitor the rental market and may recommend further areas for designation. Where, following the procedures set out in the Act, it is found at a future date that additional areas meet the criteria, they will be designated as Rent Pressure Zones.

Local Electoral Area	Quarters > 7%	Average 2017 - Q4 (€)
Dundalk Carlingford	5	€795.74
Dundalk South	5	€968.79

Rent Pressure Zones have their legal basis under the Residential Tenancies Acts 2004-2016, which regulate the landlord-tenant relationship in the private rented residential sector. Pursuant to section 3(1) of the 2004 Act, the Acts apply to every dwelling that is the subject of a tenancy. The provisions of the Acts, including those provisions providing for the rent pressure zone measure, do not apply where the dwelling is occupied by a person under an agreement which is not a tenancy agreement.

Licensing agreements, such as those that apply in respect of some types of student accommodation, are not covered by the legislative protections of the Residential Tenancies Acts because they are not deemed to be tenancy agreements for the purposes of the Acts. Consequently, the restrictions on rental increases in Rent Pressure Zones, provided for in the Acts, do not apply to accommodation types that are not subject to a tenancy agreement.

However, if there is any doubt as to the type of agreement in place in respect of individual dwellings, for example whether it is a tenancy or licence, the matter should be referred to the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB) for a determination.

In addition, the Department of Education and Skills (DES) is liaising with my Department, including through the forum of the Inter-Departmental Working Group on Student Accommodation which is convened by the DES, to examine the wide range of student accommodation types (and ancillary services) available with a view to considering how best to regulate the associated pricing arrangements.

Rent Pressure Zones

1293. Deputy Pat Casey asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the status of the criteria for the extension of the rental pressure zones to other areas of the country in view of the increases that continue to take place in counties such as County Wicklow; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24697/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): For an area to be designated a Rent Pressure Zone, it must satisfy the following criteria set out in section 24A(4) of the Residential Tenancies Act 2004, as amended:

(i) The annual rate of rent inflation in the area must have been 7% or more in four of the last six quarters; and

(ii) The average rent for tenancies registered in the area with the RTB in the last quarter must be above the average national rent (the National Standardised Rent in the RTB's Rent Index Report) in the last quarter (€1,054 per month in Q4 2017).

The Residential Tenancies Board's latest quarterly Rent Index Report for Q4 2017, which

was published in March 2018, shows reductions in the rate of rental inflation across both national and Dublin rents. The slowdown in the quarterly growth rate in Dublin rents to 1.1% in Q4 2017 is particularly noteworthy, bringing the annualised growth rate over 2017 to 5.2%, a drop from 8% in the year to Q3 2017. Significantly, this 5.2% increase for Dublin is the lowest annual growth rate since 2013. This latest quarterly index provides evidence that the introduction of the RPZs, in December 2016, is having a positive effect on rent inflation, particularly in Dublin.

The RTB Rent Index Report also includes a summary of the data used as the criteria for designating Rent Pressure Zones in relation to all Local Electoral Areas in the country. This allows everyone to see exactly where their area stands in relation to average rent levels and increases and possible designation.

For the purpose of the Act, ‘area’ is defined as either the administrative area of a housing authority or a local electoral area within the meaning of section 2 of the Local Government Act 2001. There is no provision for any other type of area to be designated as a Rent Pressure Zone.

There are 5 local electoral areas in County Wicklow - Baltinglass, Bray, Greystones, Wicklow and Arklow. Three of these - Bray, Greystones and Wicklow - have been designated as Rent Pressure Zones.

The Housing Agency continues to monitor the rental market and may recommend further areas for designation. Where, following the procedures set out in the Act, it is found at a future date that additional areas meet the criteria, they will be designated as Rent Pressure Zones.

Planning Data

1294. Deputy Pat Casey asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of pre-planning meetings that have taken place in relation to housing developments, including one-off rural houses, by local authority area in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24720/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Planning statistics compiled annually by planning authorities for collation and publication on my Department’s website do not include data on the number of pre-application meetings involving developers and planning authorities that were held in relation to proposed developments.

Such information as may be compiled by planning authorities may be sought directly from the relevant planning authority, as appropriate.

Local Infrastructure Housing Activation Fund

1295. Deputy Fiona O’Loughlin asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the amount drawn down under the Local Infrastructure Housing Activation Fund per annum to date; the number of affordable homes built; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24725/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): My Department issued the first call for proposals under the Local Infrastructure Housing Activation Fund (LIHAF) to all local authorities in August 2016. Preliminary approval was given to 34 projects in March 2017 and I have since fully approved funding for 30 of those projects, including roads, bridges and parks, at a cost of approximately €195 million, with an associated

housing delivery of 20,000 housing units by 2021.

All projects that received preliminary approval in March 2017 were allowed to proceed to design phase immediately after that and most are going through the planning and tendering phases at the moment, with one at construction stage.

Local authorities can draw down the funding allocated to their projects at any stage, once the project cost has been incurred. My Department invited the 14 local authorities involved to submit their first tranche of certified expenditure at the end of 2017 and the total submitted by local authorities for draw down was €1.6 million.

While there was an underspend by local authorities in 2017, funding for LIHAF is ring-fenced within the overall housing budget and through proactive management of the broader housing programme, any LIHAF underspend in 2017 was diverted to other housing activities, ensuring that the funding available in 2017 was fully applied to housing priorities.

The low level of the draw-down to date by local authorities reflects the stages which these infrastructure projects are at currently. The expenditure incurred during the design, planning and tendering stages is significantly lower than that at the construction stage so a major increase in drawdown is expected as projects progress through to construction.

While I am anxious for the infrastructure and the housing to be delivered as fast as possible, I recognise that local authorities must observe proper design, planning and tendering procedures. My Department will continue to monitor progress on these sites and ensure that every effort is made to secure the timely delivery of the infrastructure involved.

While LIHAF is designed primarily as a housing supply activation measure, as part of the terms of the fund, local authorities were asked to leverage the funding to ensure that housing activated by LIHAF would be made more affordable. Following final approval of projects, details of the projected delivery under LIHAF for all 30 projects were updated and are available at www.rebuildingireland.ie/lihaf. Some of the housing will be delivered in tandem with the infrastructure, with other sites needing the infrastructure to be in place before housing can be delivered. As the projects move forward over 2018 to 2021, my Department will be in a position to update on delivery of housing, including the provision of reduced-cost and affordable homes on these sites.

Local Authority Housing Eligibility

1296. Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government when the review of income eligibility limits for social housing will be finalised and published; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24726/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The Social Housing Assessment Regulations 2011 prescribe maximum net income limits for each local authority, in different bands according to the area, with income being defined and assessed according to a standard Household Means Policy.

The income bands and the authority area assigned to each band were based on an assessment of the income needed to provide for a household's basic needs, plus a comparative analysis of the local rental cost of housing accommodation across the country. It is important to note that the limits introduced at that time also reflected a blanket increase of €5,000 introduced prior to the new system coming into operation, in order to broaden the base from which social housing tenants are drawn, both promoting sustainable communities and also providing a degree of

future-proofing.

As part of the broader social housing reform agenda, a review of income eligibility for social housing supports has commenced. The Housing Agency is carrying out the detailed statistical work which will underpin this review on behalf of my Department. I expect the results of the review to be available for publication in late Summer 2018.

Tenant Purchase Scheme Review

1297. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government when the review of the tenant purchase scheme will be published; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24727/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): In line with the commitment given in *Rebuilding Ireland*, a review of the first 12 months of the Scheme's operation has been undertaken. The review has incorporated analysis of comprehensive data received from local authorities regarding the operation of the scheme during 2016 and a wide-ranging public consultation process which took place in 2017 and saw submissions received from individuals, elected representatives and organisations.

The review is now complete and a full report has been prepared setting out findings and recommendations. In finalising the report some further consultation was necessary and due consideration had to be given to possible implementation arrangements. These matters are now almost completed and I expect to be in a position to publish the outcome of the review shortly.

Housing Provision

1298. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if plans will be approved for additional housing in County Laois, incorporating social housing, affordable housing and private housing in the event of the county council bringing proposals forward; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24728/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The Government's Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness is firmly focused on increasing supply and the priority for Government attention is to support those in society with the greatest housing access and affordability challenges. In that context, the focus is on meeting the housing needs of those in the lower-income categories, particularly those in need of social housing supports and other households that are most challenged from an affordability perspective, such as first-time buyers. The significant progress being made in these areas is outlined on the Rebuilding Ireland website at www.rebuildingireland.ie.

In Budget 2018, the social housing allocation was increased to over €6 billion for the lifespan of Rebuilding Ireland, with a target of 50,000 social housing homes to be delivered by 2021, and some 87,000 households to be supported through the Housing Assistance Payment Scheme and the Rental Accommodation Scheme. In 2017, almost 26,000 households had their social housing need met, significantly ahead of the target set.

In May 2018, I wrote to all local authorities, including Laois County Council, setting out their individual social housing targets across build, acquisition and leasing for 2018 and also for 2018-2021. Details of these are available on the Rebuilding Ireland website at the following link: <http://rebuildingireland.ie/news/minister-murphy-publishes-social-housing-delivery>

targets-for-local-authorities-2018-2021/.

In respect of social housing build targets for 2018, a strong pipeline is already in place for local authorities and Approved Housing Bodies to deliver on these targets. The 2018 build target is for the delivery of 4,969 additional social housing homes, including 3,819 local authority and AHB build units. The Quarter 4 2017 Construction Status Report, which is available on the Rebuilding Ireland website at the following link, <http://rebuildingireland.ie/news/minister-murphy-publishes-social-housing-construction-status-report-q4-2017/>, provides details of projects on a local authority by authority basis.

I announced new housing affordability measures in January of this year. These target both affordable purchase and rental units to be delivered initially from local authority housing land-banks, with the potential to deliver more than 3,000 new affordable homes to buy or rent initially, with a target delivery of at least 10,000 new affordable homes in the medium to longer term.

Delivery of affordable homes will require local authorities to maximise the potential delivery of new homes from their land bank. This may include mixed-tenure developments on appropriate sites and my Department will continue to work with Laois County Council and all local authorities with regard to any social and mixed-tenure housing proposals that they bring forward, in order to maximise delivery and also harness appropriate opportunities to deliver on additional build units in 2018.

Local Infrastructure Housing Activation Fund

1299. Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government when additional projects in County Kildare will be considered for LIHAF funding; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24729/18]

1302. Deputy Joan Burton asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government when applications will be invited from local authorities for the second tranche of LIHAF; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24826/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1299 and 1302 together.

The Local Infrastructure Housing Activation Fund was designed to activate housing supply by putting in place the enabling public infrastructure necessary to ensure that large scale development could take place on key sites in urban areas of high housing demand. Final approval was given for 30 projects under LIHAF in 2017 and these projects will stimulate development of approximately 20,000 housing units across 14 local authorities.

Activation of housing development at scale is a priority under Pillar 3 of Rebuilding Ireland, but so too is the delivery of more affordable homes and I note the particular challenges in the cities of Dublin and Cork where people are facing the greatest affordability challenges.

Earlier this year, I announced a package of initiatives to help alleviate affordability pressures faced by households, particularly in those areas of high housing demand and high accommodation costs. The measures announced include the establishment of the Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan, the re-introduction of an affordable purchase scheme, and the introduction of cost rental projects. Further details on the suite of initiatives can be found at <http://rebuildingireland.ie/news/min-murphys-statement-on-affordable-homes/>.

Importantly, the new affordability measures are specifically targeted at delivering more af-

fordable homes from the State's land bank. In this regard, and to aid local authorities further in delivering affordable housing from their sites, as part of Budget 2018, the Government announced the establishment of a new Serviced Sites Fund to unlock local authority-owned lands specifically to deliver affordable homes. The funding will support local authorities to provide enabling infrastructure on sites which they own, particularly in urban areas facing the greatest affordability challenge. I intend to issue a call for proposals under the Fund in the near future.

Within this cross-cutting policy context, I am also reviewing the plans for a second call under LIHAF, in light of the new measures referenced above, the importance of synergy with the Serviced Sites Fund, and the imminent calls for proposals under the new €2bn Urban Regeneration and Development Fund and the €1bn Rural Regeneration and Development Fund under Project Ireland 2040 and the 10-year National Development Plan. These funds are aimed at enabling residential and commercial development, supported by infrastructure, services and amenities, within the existing built-up areas of all of our urban settlements as well as transforming our rural towns and villages and their outlying areas, to ensure that they are viable and attractive places in which to live, work, invest and visit.

I expect to make a decision regarding a second call under LIHAF shortly.

Local Authority Housing Provision

1300. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if each approved construction, turnkey and large scale acquisition projects, that is, capital funded in 2015 and 2016 have been completed and occupied in accordance with Appendix 2 of Laying the Foundations: Housing Actions Report in April 2016, in tabular form. [24769/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Since the publication in April 2016 of the Housing Action Report Laying the Foundations, Rebuilding Ireland has further increased the targets and the funding resources for the delivery of social housing. Critically, €6 billion in exchequer investment is now available for the delivery of 50,000 social housing units through build, refurbishment, acquisitions and leasing, over the period to 2021.

This funding is available to all local authorities to advance their social housing construction programmes, including projects detailed in appendix 2 of the Laying the Foundations report. Substantial additional construction projects have been added to the social housing delivery programme since then and with a view to greater transparency in this area, I publish, on a quarterly basis, a comprehensive status report of all the social housing construction schemes for all local authority areas. These reports show details such as the project locations and a range of information relating to their advancement, whether completed or on site or progressing through planning, design and construction and it includes projects approved in 2015 and 2016 and listed in appendix 2 of the Laying the Foundations report.

The most recent of these quarterly reports was published on 19 April 2018. It covers the period up to end Quarter 4 2017 and is available on the Rebuilding Ireland website at the following link: <http://rebuildingireland.ie/news/minister-murphy-publishes-social-housing-construction-status-report-q4-2017/>.

The report shows a pipeline of over 13,400 social homes, a very substantial increase on the 8,430 homes in the pipeline a year earlier. At end-2017, almost 2,600 social homes were completed, with another 3,650 homes under construction, 1,900 homes about to go on site and the remaining 5,300 homes progressing through the various stages of planning, design and

procurement.

The report covering the period to the end of Quarter 1 of 2018 is currently being compiled and will be published in the coming weeks. Further social housing project approvals are being added to the construction programme as they are developed by local authorities and approved housing bodies. I am keen that all local authorities advance their social housing projects as speedily as possible and I have assured them that funding is in place to support their activity in this regard.

Expert Panel on Concrete Blocks

1301. Deputy Eoin Ó Broin asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government when the first two recommendations from the report of the expert panel on concrete blocks in counties Donegal and Mayo will be implemented; and when a redress scheme for the affected families will be introduced. [24772/18]

1319. Deputy Thomas Pringle asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the reason a redress scheme for homeowners affected by mica will not be committed to despite its prevalence in County Donegal; the reason a redress scheme cannot be committed to until the consultation process is completed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25134/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Damien English): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1301 and 1319 together.

The Expert Panel on concrete blocks was established by my Department in 2016, to investigate problems that have emerged in the concrete blockwork of certain dwellings in Counties Donegal and Mayo.

The panel had the following terms of reference:

- (i) To identify, insofar as it is possible, the numbers of private dwellings which appear to be affected by defects in the blockwork in the Counties of Donegal and Mayo;
- (ii) To carry out a desktop study, which would include a consultation process with affected homeowners, public representatives, local authorities, product manufacturers, building professionals, testing laboratories, industry stakeholders and other relevant parties, to establish the nature of the problem in the affected dwellings;
- (iii) To outline a range of technical options for remediation and the means by which those technical options could be applied; and
- (iv) To submit a report within six months.

On 13 June 2017, the report of the Expert Panel was published and included eight recommendations which my Department are actively progressing with the relevant stakeholders.

The Department is prioritising the implementation of Recommendations 1 and 2.

With regard to Recommendation 1, the National Standards Authority of Ireland (NSAI) Technical Committee, established to scope and fast track the development of a standardised protocol, held its inaugural meeting on 11 September 2017 and has held several further meetings since. The standardised protocol will inform the course of action in relation to remedial works for all affected householders. The draft standard, which was published on 6 June 2018

for public consultation is available at: <http://www.nsainep.ie/Home/Details/11454>, and will run for a period of six weeks.

The draft standard, I.S. 465 - Assessment, testing and categorisation of damaged buildings incorporating concrete blocks containing certain deleterious materials, outlines a protocol which will be used to assess and categorise the damage in properties where the concrete blocks are suspected to contain the minerals mica or pyrite. Previously, there was no common way for engineers or homeowners to assess the damage caused by defective concrete blocks to help decide what, if any, remedial work could be carried out.

This Standard:

- a. establishes a protocol for assessing and determining whether a building has been damaged by concrete blocks containing certain excessive amounts of deleterious materials (free or unbound muscovite mica, or aggregate with potentially deleterious quantities of pyrite),
- b. describes methods for establishing the extent of the problem;
- c. describes the scope of any testing required; and
- d. categorises buildings, in accordance with this Standard, providing competent persons with guidance on the appropriate measures to be taken.

With regard to Recommendation 2, my Department has been in contact with Engineers Ireland in relation to the establishment of a register of competent engineers for homeowners/affected parties' reference. Engineers Ireland have provided assurance that they will collaborate with the Department, the NSAI and others on measures to establish such a register once the standardised protocol is in place.

Last year I visited Donegal and Mayo and met with key stakeholders, including affected homeowners, elected members and officials of the local authorities and other interested parties. On 18 December 2017, I again visited Donegal and met with key stakeholders to provide an update on the progress to date. I made a similar visit to Mayo on 26 January 2018.

Once the public consultation process has been finalised and the standardised protocol is in place, I will be in a position to provide a further update on progress at that time.

In addition, I am currently considering what further actions may be required to assist the parties directly involved in reaching a satisfactory resolution to the problems that have emerged in the two counties.

Question No. 1302 answered with Question No. 1299.

Rental Sector

1303. Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government his strategy to address the problem of excessive rent increases in areas outside rent pressure zones. [24839/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Section 24A of the Residential Tenancies Act 2004, as amended, provides that the Housing Agency, in consultation with housing authorities, may make a proposal to the Minister that an area should be considered as a Rent Pressure Zone. Following receipt of such a proposal, the Minister requests the Director of the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB) to conduct an assess-

ment of the area to establish whether or not it meets the criteria for designation and to report to the Minister on whether the area should be designated as a Rent Pressure Zone. For the purpose of the Act, ‘area’ is defined as either the administrative area of a housing authority or a local electoral area within the meaning of section 2 of the Local Government Act 2001. There is no provision for any other type of area to be designated as a Rent Pressure Zone.

For an area to be designated a Rent Pressure Zone, it must satisfy the following criteria set out in section 24A(4) of the Residential Tenancies Act 2004 (as inserted by section 36 of the Planning and Development (Housing) and Residential Tenancies Act 2016):

- (i) The annual rate of rent inflation in the area must have been 7% or more in four of the last six quarters; and
- (ii) The average rent for tenancies registered in the area with the RTB in the last quarter must be above the average national rent (the National Standardised Rent in the RTB’s Rent Index Report) in the last quarter (i.e. €1,054 per month in Q4 2017).

On 21 March 2018, the RTB published its Rent Index Report in relation to Quarter 4 2017, which includes a summary of the data used as the criteria for designating Rent Pressure Zones in relation to all Local Electoral Areas in the country. This allows everyone to see exactly where their area stands in relation to average rent levels and increases and possible designation.

Rent reviews outside of Rent Pressure Zones are restricted so that a landlord can only review the rent once in any two-year period. However, similar to within Rent Pressure Zones, where there is a substantial change in the nature of the accommodation provided, for example through a major refurbishment of the property, a landlord may review the rent before the two-year period has ended and therefore many of the principles in determining what is classified as substantial change are the same. The existing requirement that the rent set is not above the market rents for similar properties still applies in designated Rent Pressure Zones and in non-designated areas.

The Housing Agency continues to monitor the rental market and may recommend further areas for designation. Where, following the procedures set out in the Act, it is found at a future date that additional areas meet the criteria, they will be designated as Rent Pressure Zones.

Local Authority Services

1304. Deputy Tony McLoughlin asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the status of an application by Sligo County Council with regard to an extension to an address (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24869/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): A submission in relation to the extension referred to has been recently received by my Department from Sligo County Council and I understand that the works are likely to be tendered soon.

Rental Sector

1305. Deputy Paul Murphy asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government his views on whether a review of tenants’ rights is required, in view of the details of the case of persons (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24871/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): A

number of measures have been introduced in recent years with the objective of improving security of tenure for tenants. Security of tenure provisions under the Residential Tenancies Acts 2004-2016 apply once a tenant has been in occupation of a dwelling for a continuous period of 6 months, with no valid notice of termination having been served during that time. Section 34 provides that a landlord must state a reason for the termination in any notice served, in accordance with the grounds for termination set out the Table to section 34 of the Act.

The Residential Tenancies Board (RTB) was established as an independent statutory body under the Acts to operate a national tenancy registration system and to resolve disputes between landlords and tenants. While it is not clear what type of tenancy is involved in the situation outlined, the RTB replaces the Courts for the vast majority of landlord and tenant disputes which come under the remit of Residential Tenancies Acts. Section 56 of the 2004 Act provides that, where there is an abuse of the termination procedure in section 34, a tenant may bring a complaint to the RTB on the basis that they have been unjustly deprived of possession of a dwelling by their landlord. Further information from the RTB is available at www.rtb.ie/tenants and through the RTB helpline - Lo-call on 0818 30 30 37.

In April this year, the Government approved the General Scheme of the Residential Tenancies (Amendment) Bill 2018 as a basis for priority drafting of an urgent Bill to give legislative underpinning to a number of specific actions outlined in the Government's Strategy for the Rental Sector and the review of Rebuilding Ireland. The main purpose of the Bill is to reinforce the operation of the rental sector, through addressing a number of key tenant protection issues, provide greater transparency around rents, as well as enhancing and strengthening the powers and functions of the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB), particularly in enforcing tenancy law.

Local Authority Housing

1306. Deputy Tony McLoughlin asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the 2018 funding allocations for voids and adaptations made to Sligo, Leitrim and Roscommon county councils; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24872/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Allocations for 2018 in respect of local authority void properties are currently being finalised and will be issued shortly.

In respect of adaptations and extensions to existing social homes to meet the needs of local authority tenants, the proposals for such works on the part of each of the local authorities have recently been evaluated and funding allocations for the full year will be confirmed shortly to the local authorities. Ahead of that, local authorities have been advancing work under the scheme based on a funding provision of up to 65% of their 2017 allocation. This allowed them to plan and progress works under the scheme and allows for the full utilisation of the 2018 allocation throughout the year.

My Department also provides funding under the Housing Adaptation Grants scheme for Older People and People with a Disability in private houses. Information on the 2018 allocations recently announced under this scheme to each local authority, including Sligo, Leitrim and Roscommon, is available on my Department's website at the following link:

<http://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/special-housing-needs/minister-english-announces-eu6625-million-funding-improve-homes-older>.

Vacant Sites Data

1307. Deputy Jan O'Sullivan asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of sites of each local authority listed on the vacant sites register in advance of the application of the levy in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24878/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Damien English): The Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015 introduced a new measure, the vacant site levy, which is aimed at incentivising the development of vacant, under-utilised sites in urban areas. Under the Act, planning authorities are required to establish a register of vacant sites in their areas, beginning on 1 January 2017. Planning authorities have issued notices to owners of vacant sites by 1 June this year in respect of vacant sites included on their respective registers on 1 January 2018, indicating that the levy will apply to those sites on 1 January 2019.

My Department does not maintain a central register of vacant sites as each local authority administers the vacant site register in respect of their functional area. However, on foot of a recent review of the on-line vacant site registers across all local authority areas, I understand that there are collectively approximately 230 individual sites currently on the local registers. Of these, just under 190 sites were entered on the local vacant site registers on 1 January 2018 and will therefore be subject to the levy in 2019, unless development works are activated in the interim.

My Department will continue to monitor implementation of the levy to ensure that it is being fully used, in line with its intended purpose of incentivising the development of vacant or under-utilised sites in urban areas and so that the full potential of the measure can be realised.

Tenant Purchase Scheme Review

1308. Deputy Brendan Smith asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government when he will publish the review of the tenant purchase scheme; if persons in receipt of a social welfare payment and who are in a position to purchase their homes will not be deprived of the opportunity to avail of the tenant purchase scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24963/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The Tenant (Incremental) Purchase Scheme came into operation on 1 January 2016. The Scheme is open to eligible tenants, including joint tenants, of local authority houses that are available for sale under the Scheme. To be eligible, tenants must meet certain criteria, including having a minimum reckonable income of €15,000 per annum and having been in receipt of social housing support for at least one year.

The minimum reckonable income for eligibility under the scheme is determined by the relevant local authority in accordance with the detailed provisions of the Ministerial Direction issued under Sections 24(3) and (4) of the 2014 Act. In the determination of the minimum reckonable income, local authorities include income from a number of different sources and classes, such as from employment, private pensions, maintenance payments and certain social welfare payments, including pensions, where the social welfare payment is secondary to employment income.

In determining reckonable income, the income of all tenants of the house, including adult children that are joint tenants, is included, as is the income of the spouse, civil partner or other

partner / cohabitant of a tenant who lives in the house with them, thus ensuring the appropriate level of discount is applied to the purchase price.

The minimum income criterion was introduced in order to ensure the sustainability of the scheme. Applicants must demonstrate that they have an income that is long-term and sustainable in nature. This ensures that the tenant purchasing the house is in a financial position, as the owner, to maintain and insure the property for the duration of the charged period, in compliance with the conditions of the order transferring the ownership of, and responsibility for, the house from the local authority to the tenant.

In line with the commitment given in *Rebuilding Ireland*, a review of the first 12 months of the Scheme's operation has been undertaken. The review has incorporated analysis of comprehensive data received from local authorities regarding the operation of the scheme during 2016 and a wide-ranging public consultation process which took place in 2017 and saw submissions received from individuals, elected representatives and organisations.

The review is now complete and a full report has been prepared setting out findings and recommendations. In finalising the report some further consultation was necessary and due consideration had to be given to possible implementation arrangements. These matters are now almost completed and I expect to be in a position to publish the outcome of the review shortly.

Mortgage Lending

1309. Deputy Michael McGrath asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if persons whose credit history indicates some missed loan repayments in the past can still qualify under the Rebuilding Ireland home loan scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24984/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan is designed to enable credit-worthy first-time buyers to access sustainable mortgage lending to purchase new or second-hand properties in a suitable price range. The scheme is targeted at first-time buyers who have access to an adequate deposit and have the capacity to repay a mortgage, but who are unable to access a mortgage sufficient for them to purchase their first home.

As part of the application process for the Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan scheme, applicants must:

- consent to an Irish Credit Bureau search; and
- provide evidence of all existing borrowings, with 12 month up-to-date loan statements.

Applicants with a poor record of repaying loans are unlikely to secure approval for the Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan. However, the final decision on loan approval is a matter for each local authority and its Credit Committee on a case-by-case basis.

Decisions on all housing loan applications must be made in accordance with the statutory credit policy that underpins the scheme, in order to ensure consistency of treatment for all applicants. Loan applicants who are dissatisfied with a loan application decision of a local authority Credit Committee may appeal that decision to the local authority. Details of the appeals process can be obtained from the relevant local authority.

Grant Payments

1310. Deputy Jackie Cahill asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if grants payable under the Domestic Waste Water Treatment Systems (Financial Assistance) Regulations 2013, that is, SI No. 222 of 2013, are paid on approval or on completion of the agreed work; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [24988/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The Domestic Waste Water Treatment Systems (Financial Assistance) Regulations 2013 (S.I. No. 222 of 2013) provide that a grant for qualifying works is only payable on completion of those works and in compliance with a number of criteria.

Electoral Reform

1311. Deputy Clare Daly asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government further to Parliamentary Question No. 242 of 31 May 2018, if he will confirm that the Bible should not be on display in polling stations and should only be presented for the taking oaths or affirmations by voters in certain circumstances. [25000/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy John Paul Phelan): A copy of the Bible forms part of the essential documents and equipment used by presiding officers at polling stations. All operational arrangements in polling stations, including arrangements for the use of essential documents and equipment, are a matter for local returning officers and in turn for the presiding officer at each polling station.

If a voter is asked by a presiding officer to take an oath or an affirmation, such as, for instance, confirmation of a voter's identity, it is up to the voter to decide which to take. The availability of the bible is simply a measure of administrative efficiency to facilitate the process of taking an oath. An elector may make an affirmation if they object to taking an oath on the ground that he or she has no religious belief or that the taking of an oath is contrary to his or her religious belief.

Protected Disclosures

1312. Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the date an application by a person (details supplied) was received under the Protected Disclosure Act 2014; the reason for the delay in issuing a decision to the request; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25044/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The submission in question made under the Protected Disclosures Act 2014 was first received by my Department on 22 June 2016.

Consideration of the matters raised in the submission has taken longer to complete than initially envisaged. However, the lapse of time since the matters the subject of the submission arose, as well as the range and seriousness of the allegations made, have been contributing factors.

As the individual concerned was informed in writing on 18 May 2018, my Department has now concluded its assessment of the submission, the report provided by the relevant local authority in response and associated supplementary information. Legal advice of the Office of

the Attorney General in relation to my Department's assessment has been sought with a view to informing the appropriate next steps.

Social and Affordable Housing Maintenance

1313. Deputy Jackie Cahill asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if an association will be requested to bring a house back into repair (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25057/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The management and maintenance of local authority or approved housing body social housing stock is a matter for each individual local authority in the first instance, including housing maintenance and repairs. In relation to the property referred to, I understand that refurbishment works on the property are imminent and are due to be completed within 3 weeks.

Social and Affordable Housing Data

1314. Deputy Jackie Cahill asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of housing units owned by an association (details supplied) without a tenant; the period of time they have been without a tenant, by county, in tabular form; the main reason for this; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25058/18]

1315. Deputy Jackie Cahill asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of housing units owned by an association (details supplied) that are without a tenant; the period of time they have been without a tenant, by county, in tabular form; the main reason for this; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25059/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1314 and 1315 together.

The information that the Deputy has sought is not available in the format requested.

Under the Social Housing Current Expenditure Programme (SHCEP), properties leased and owned by Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs), including properties funded under the Capital Advance Leasing Facility (CALF), are made available to local authorities for social housing under Payment and Availability (P&A) Agreements. Where such a dwelling becomes vacant, the terms of the P&A agreements provide that payments continue to be made to the AHB for a maximum period of 3 consecutive months in order to allow for re-tenancy of the dwelling. For CALF properties, this period can be extended by one additional month where the housing authority has not provided a nomination within one month of being notified of the vacancy.

If the dwelling remains vacant at the end of the 3-month period and has not been withdrawn from the scheme, it is deemed to be inactive and notified to my Department. No payment is made by my Department in respect of inactive dwellings. Inactive dwellings may become active again when they are re-tenanted.

In relation to the AHBs referred to in the questions, I understand that there are currently no inactive properties in the SHCEP programme. However, my Department does not hold data on properties within SHCEP that have been vacant for less than 3 months.

AHBs may also avail of funding of up to 100% under my Department's Capital Assistance Scheme to assist them in providing housing for the elderly, homeless and people with dis-

abilities. As this scheme is administered by the local authorities, my Department does not have information relating to tenancies.

The oversight of AHBs is currently conducted through the Voluntary Regulation Code (VRC), Building for the Future, A Voluntary Regulation Code for Approved Housing Bodies in Ireland, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.housingagency.ie/Regulation/The-Code.pdf>.

At present, 245 AHBs are signed up to the VRC which is overseen by the Interim Regulation Committee (IRC), based in the Housing Agency.

Annual regulatory returns for the AHBs which are signed up to the Code are submitted to the Housing Agency's Regulation Office which undertakes an assessment of those AHBs. While I understand that the Regulation Office does not as a matter of course collect data on the information sought by the Deputy, as part of the annual assessment, AHBs are asked to provide the total number of voids that an organisation experienced in a year and the average length of voids. However, the Regulation Office does not provide data on individual AHBs, but provides consolidated data on the sector within their Annual Reports, which are available on their website at the following weblink:

<https://www.housingagency.ie/regulation/publications-and-useful-links.aspx>.

Planning Data

1316. Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of planning appeals against local authority decisions decided in 2018 by An Bord Pleanála; the number of these decided within the statutory objective time of four months; the average time it takes to decide appeals; the steps he plans to take in terms of the provision of resources or otherwise to address the delay in dealing with planning appeals; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25077/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Under Section 126 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, An Bord Pleanála has a statutory objective to determine planning appeals within 18 weeks. Where the Board does not consider it possible or appropriate to reach a decision within 18 weeks (e.g. because of the particular complexities of a case or the requirement to hold an oral hearing), it will inform the parties of the reasons for this, and will indicate when it intends to make its decision.

During the period January to April 2018, the Board received 713 normal planning appeals and disposed of 635 cases, 222 of which were disposed of within the statutory objective period, resulting in a compliance rate of 35%. This overall reduction in the compliance rate can be attributed to a number of factors.

Firstly, there was a reduction in Board capacity in mid-2017, arising from a time interval between the departure of five outgoing Board members, whose terms of office had expired in April and May, and the five new replacement Board members taking up their posts. While by September 2017, the Board complement had been fully replenished, this time interval significantly impacted on the Board's case work output for some time thereafter.

In addition, An Bord Pleanála is also implementing a major ICT strategy which will facilitate the introduction of on-line planning services as part of a complete upgrade and replacement of core systems. In this regard, a new case management system was installed and became

operational in Q4 2017. As is to be expected with such a fundamental and integrated project, the transition to the new system has caused some initial disruption to the processing of cases, resulting in a further increase in the backlog of cases on hand. However, measures have been put in place to ensure that the new system is bedded down and becomes operational at an optimal level as soon as possible.

Furthermore, during this period, there has been a general increase in cases received by the Board. For example, there was an increase of almost 12% on normal planning appeals received in 2017 compared to 2016; this upward trend has continued into 2018. The intake of normal planning appeals at end-April 2018 was 17% greater than the intake at end-April 2017. As mentioned above, during the period January to April 2018, the Board disposed of 635 appeal cases, compared to 601 cases during the same period in 2017.

Now that the Board's full complement has been restored, combined with the measures that are being put in place in relation to the new ICT systems, it is expected that the backlog of cases will begin to reduce over the coming months, with an associated improvement in the compliance rate with the statutory objective period for the determination of cases.

It should be noted that, in line with Government policy in relation to the provision of housing supply, all planning appeals in respect of housing developments of 30 units or more are prioritised by the Board for decision. The Board also prioritises developments which have a significant employment or economic potential on a national, regional or local scale as well as new, and extensions to, school buildings and educational facilities.

In relation to priority cases being dealt with by the Board, since July 2017, the Board has been determining planning applications for strategic housing developments (SHDs) made directly to it within the 16-week timeframe prescribed for such planning applications under the provisions of the Planning and Development (Housing) and Residential Tenancies Act 2016. At end-April 2018, 24 SHD planning applications had been made, with the Board issuing decisions in 16 cases, all of which were made within the prescribed 16-week timeframe.

My Department liaises closely with the Board to ensure that it has appropriate resources in relation to the performance of its functions. With regard to the additional functions in relation to SHDs recently assigned to the Board, a new Strategic Housing Division of the Board has been established to decide on these applications, involving the recruitment of an additional dedicated 10 professional and administrative staff members in 2017. Two additional Board members have also been sanctioned to serve this Division, with the appointments being made in February and June this year. The Board now has a complement of 11 members and there are over 150 staff members employed by An Bord Pleanála. I am satisfied that the Board has sufficient and necessary resources in this regard.

Planning Issues

1317. Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the progress made to date in discussions with the EU Commission on the “Flemish Decree”; his plans to hold a public consultation on this matter before issuing a new planning circular to the local authorities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25082/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Following engagement between the European Commission and my Department regarding the 2013 European Court of Justice ruling in the “Flemish Decree” case, a working group, comprising senior representatives from my Department and planning authorities, was established

in May 2017 to review and, where necessary, recommend changes to the 2005 Planning Guidelines on Sustainable Rural Housing, issued under section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, with a view to ensuring that rural housing policies and objectives contained in local authority development plans comply with the relevant provisions of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.

This Working Group concluded its deliberations in September 2017 and taking account of the Group's analysis and recommended outcome, my Department has been engaging with the Commission on the matter, with a view to issuing a further circular letter to planning authorities as soon as possible, setting out revisions to the 2005 Guidelines that take account of the relevant ECJ judgment. I have no plans to conduct a public consultation prior to the issuing of the circular.

Fire Stations Provision

1318. Deputy Michael Moynihan asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the status of the construction of the new fire station in Kanturk, County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25124/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The provision of a fire service in its functional area, including the establishment and maintenance of a fire brigade, the assessment of fire cover needs and the provision of fire station premises, is a statutory function of individual fire authorities under section 10 of the Fire Services Act 1981. My Department supports the fire authorities through setting general policy, providing a central training programme, issuing guidance on operational and other related matters and providing capital funding for priority infrastructural projects.

A re-assessment of fire station projects was undertaken in 2015. This graded proposals on the basis of the:

- Area Risk Categorisation of the Fire Station (population, fire risks etc.);
- Established Health and Safety Needs;
- State of development of the project (is site acquired, etc.);
- Value for Money offered by the proposal.

As a result of this re-assessment, a new programme of construction/ refurbishment of twenty six fire stations was proposed. This included sixteen new builds and ten upgrade/refurbishments.

Kanturk Fire Station is included in the programme of 16 fire stations for construction and funding is planned and provided for within the five-year, €40 million allocation of funding for the Fire Services Capital Programme announced in February 2016. A site is available for the station and draft designs have been received and reviewed. My Department will be continuing to work with Cork County Council to progress this fire station project as quickly as possible.

Question No. 1319 answered with Question No. 1301.

Legislative Measures

1320. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the sections and parts of all legislation brought forward by his Department in each of the past four years that have yet to be commenced; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25181/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The sections and parts of all legislation brought forward by my Department in each of the past four years that have yet to be commenced, are set out in the following table.

Act	Sections/Parts not yet commenced
Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2014	Part 4 - Section 41(4): Designation of areas where no further dwellings will be approved for housing assistance Part 4 - Section 44: Payment to housing authority by HAP beneficiary of rent contribution under s. 31 of 2009 Act (ss. (1)) and Prescription of manner of payment of rent contribution (ss. (2)) Part 4 - Section 47: Payment of HAP in respect of certain beneficiaries under the Capital Assistance Scheme Part 4 - Section 48: Internal review, on request, of HAP decisions in prescribed decision classes Section 20 Section 53 Section 54(1)
Local Government Reform Act 2014	Section 1 (23)
Residential Tenancies (Amendment) Act 2015	Sections 16 (d) and (g); 17(d) and (e); 23-24; 34-35; 37-38; 43; 46; 48; 51(1)(b); 52*; 53; 57(1)(b); 59; 60(a), (b)*, (c) and (e)*; 61; 62(b)(iii); 63 (a), (b), (c) and (d)*; 64-65; 70-73*these provisions have partially commenced.
Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015	Section 34
Planning and Development (Housing) and Residential Tenancies Act 2016	Sections 26 and 27 Section 28(1) Sections 44, 45 and 48 of Part 3 and Part 3 of the Schedule
Water Services Act 2017	Section 61; Section (5)(1)(b)(iv); Section 23.
Electoral (Amendment) (Dáil Constituencies) Act 2017	Section 6, which concerns the repeal of the Electoral (Amendment) (Dáil Constituencies) Act 2013, comes into operation automatically on the dissolution of Dáil Éireann that next occurs.

Water and Sewerage Schemes

1321. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the estimated annual cost if the existing subsidy to domestic group and private well water users covered the full operating costs of providing water for domestic use. [25222/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): In late 2017, my Department conducted a review of Group Water Schemes' subsidies. The review involved discussions with the National Federation of Group Water Schemes, the representative body of the group water sector. Discussions concluded in December, when I approved revised

subsidy levels. The new subsidy arrangements, endorsed by a special delegate conference of the Federation on 13 December 2017, came into effect on 1 January 2018. It is estimated that the revised subsidy levels will cost approximately €23.3 million per year compared with an average annual cost of €19.5 million for past comparable years.

This increase in the level of subsidies to Group Water Schemes was the first of a number of actions I am taking to address the recommendation contained in the report of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on the Future Funding of Domestic Water Services, endorsed by both Houses of the Oireachtas in April 2017, that there is equity of treatment and equivalent financial support between households using public water services and those availing of private water services.

At that time I also signalled my intention to establish a Working Group to conduct a wider review of investment needs and rural water services. The Working Group was established in April 2018 and its inaugural meeting took place on 17 May.

The Group's review is considering how best to position and resource water services in rural areas so that they can contribute further to the development and long-term sustainability of a comprehensive and cohesive Rural Water Sector that will have the capacity to produce quality outcomes comparable to those available to customers of public water services. The Working Group is focusing on the actions required to improve and sustain rural water services, and will consider issues such as governance, supervision and monitoring of the sector, in addition to capital investment priorities and requirements across all elements of rural water services. In keeping with the Joint Oireachtas Committee's recommendation this Working Group will consider the investment needs of all elements of rural water services including Group Water Schemes, Group Sewerage Schemes and Domestic Waste Water Treatment Systems. The Working Group is specifically tasked with addressing grant support for Individual Domestic Water Supplies (private wells) to encourage the refurbishment of wells to improve the quality of drinking water in private supplies.

Considering the importance and scale of this task it is considered important that the Working Group would have access to accurate recent comprehensive information on all aspects of the Rural Water Sector. Therefore to support the business of the Working Group an exercise is being initiated to gather information on the capacity of the Rural Water Sector and to establish the interventions including the levels of capital investment and the levels of funding that will be required to sustain the Sector.

Local Authority Management

1322. Deputy Pat Casey asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if there will be a review of the powers of the chief executive role in local authorities, with a view to ensuring accountability and transparency in local government; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25228/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy John Paul Phelan): In response to a Programme for Partnership Government commitment, a policy paper on local government leadership, which will examine the possible direct election of mayors for Ireland's cities, will be submitted to Government in the coming weeks. This paper will consider the division of executive and reserved functions in local authorities, and examine alternatives to current arrangements. It is in this context that the potential relationship between a city council chief executive and its directly elected mayor will be considered.

Housing Adaptation Grant

1323. Deputy Tom Neville asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if there is a benefit solution to make up the shortfall in the cost of providing a purpose room for an autistic child in a private house after the housing adaptation grant has been granted in circumstances in which the parents, who are not entitled to social welfare due to employment, cannot avail of a financial institution loan due to health grounds. [25366/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): My Department provides funding under the suite of Housing Adaptation Grant Schemes for Older People and People with a Disability, in respect of adaptations to private houses. There are three separate grants available and local authorities receive an overall allocation, with responsibility for the apportionment between the schemes being a matter for each local authority. The Housing Adaptation Grant for People with a Disability scheme provides grants of up to €30,000 to assist people with a disability to have necessary adaptations, repairs or improvement works carried out. The detailed administration of the schemes, including the assessment, approval and payment of individual grants to applicants, is the responsibility of the relevant local authority.

There is no further funding available from my Department to make up the shortfall between the grant and cost of works; however, the means of the applicant are taken into account in the calculation of the grant.

Regeneration Projects Funding

1324. Deputy Micheál Martin asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if he will report on his announcement on 30 May 2018 regarding the urban regeneration and development fund. [25358/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): On 30th May, An Taoiseach, along with myself and relevant Ministers, launched €4 billion in Project Ireland 2040 funds for rural development, urban regeneration, climate action and technological innovation, the details of which can be found online at the following link:

https://merrionstreet.ie/en/News-Room/News/Government_launches_four_funds_for_rural_development_urban_regeneration_climate_action_innovation.html

The announcement includes the establishment of a €2 billion fund 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 €2 billion Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF) will secure more compact, sustainable growth in Ireland's five cities and other large urban centres. This funding, separate and in addition to normal sectoral funding streams, is designed to leverage a greater proportion of residential and commercial development, supported by infrastructure, services and amenities, within the existing built-up areas of our larger urban settlements.

The 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 National Development Plan (NDP) funds will be published shortly, with URDF bids for funding invited for an initial three-year period to 2021, with the

scope for further bids in 2019 and subsequently over the lifetime of the NDP.

Housing Grant Payments

1325. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if there are grants available to convert an old farm dwelling into a modern, liveable dwelling; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25547/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):

There are no specific grants available from my Department for this purpose. The range of housing grants available from my Department mainly relate to the delivery and improvement of social housing.

Departmental Funding

1326. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government his Department's capital allocation in each of the years 2019 to 2023, inclusive; and the areas to which funds will be allocated in each of those years. [25574/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):

The capital expenditure provisions for my Department over the period 2019-22, as announced in *Project Ireland 2040: National Development Plan 2018-2027*, are set out in the following table (no specific Departmental allocations were made in respect of 2023):

Capital Allocations 2019-22 (€m)	2019	2020	2021	2022
Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government	2,033	2,079	2,209	2,280

These funding allocations will be used to advance capital investment across a range of programme areas within my Department's remit, including local authority housing, voluntary housing, estate regeneration, the Local Infrastructure Housing Activation Fund, urban regeneration and development, water and wastewater services, and fire and emergency services. Details of specific allocations towards individual programmes will be finalised as part of the annual Estimates processes, as normal.

An Bord Pleanála

1327. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the rules that govern the exclusion of certain members of An Bord Pleanála from participating in decision-making at board level on the grounds of conflict of interest or possible conflict of interest; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25605/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): An Bord Pleanála operates under a Code of Conduct as required by section 150 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, one of the purposes of which is to ensure that any potential conflicts of interest relating to its statutory functions are dealt with in an appropriate manner. This Code is available for viewing on the Board's website at the following link:

<http://www.bleanala.ie/about/conduct.htm>

Section 13 of the Code outlines the procedures for dealing with conflicts of interest in the context of Board meetings, where appeals and other planning cases are determined. Section 15.2 of the Code specifically requires that a Board member shall not deal with any case in any capacity on behalf of the Board where the member had any involvement at any time in the matter, either on a personal basis or on behalf of a previous employer or as a member of any other organisation or voluntary body.

Furthermore, section 15.4 requires that a Board member shall not knowingly deal with a file relating to a planning authority or a private practice where he or she was previously employed during the previous 2-year period or any voluntary or professional organisation of which the person is or was a member during the previous 2-year period.

NAMA Receivers

1328. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the reason the receiver acting for NAMA has been allowed to appeal against a decision agreed in 2017 between all the parties concerned, including NAMA, to set aside 900 social and affordable homes as part of the Poolbeg West strategic development zone, SDZ (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25619/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):
My Department understands that the receiver, appointed by NAMA, in respect of the lands at Poolbeg West SDZ is the legal owner of the lands in question and, like all receivers, is subject to certain legal obligations under the Companies Act in recovering the value of the relevant assets and is therefore entitled to make an appeal to An Bord Pleanála with regard to the planning conditions on the site that may affect that value.

I have no role in relation to the functions of the receiver and an oral hearing in relation to the appeal was heard by An Bord Pleanála in April 2018 and the case remains ongoing.

Under Section 30 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, I am specifically precluded from exercising any power or control in relation to any case with which a planning authority or An Bord Pleanála is or may be concerned.

Notwithstanding the appeal process and subject to the Board's ultimate decision, I and my Department remain committed to working with both the City Council, any relevant housing bodies (AHBs) and either the receiver and/or developers of the SDZ area in order to secure additional social and affordable housing from this site over and above Part V obligations and of the order of magnitude laid out in the adopted planning scheme, but subject to agreement on all the normal and relevant terms, including value for money aspects.

Electoral Reform

1329. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government his plans to review electoral law (details supplied) to make it easier for Irish citizens living abroad or abroad on holidays to participate in future elections by availing of a postal vote; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25623/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy John Paul Phelan): I refer the Deputy to the reply to Parliamentary Question No. 1568 of 17 April 2018, which sets out the position on this matter.

1330. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of clerks of works by local authority in tabular form; if his attention has been drawn to the concerns about the operation of the building control regulation system; if additional clerks of works will be recruited to deal with the growth of the residential construction sector of the economy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25638/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):

My Department oversees workforce planning for the local government sector, including the monitoring of local government sector employment levels. To this end, my Department gathers quarterly data on staff numbers in local authorities; however, the data gathered does not provide details in terms of the number of clerks of works employed in each local authority. Accordingly, the information requested is not available in my Department, but may be obtained directly from individual local authorities. High-level staffing numbers for the local authority sector are available on the Public Service Numbers Databank, which is hosted and maintained by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and is available at the following link: <http://databank.per.gov.ie/>, providing access to information from 1980 onwards.

The National Building Control Management Project (NBCMP) was set up to provide oversight, direction and support for the development, standardisation and implementation of the Building Control System as an effective shared service in the 31 Building Control Authorities. Dublin City Council has recently been approved to be the lead building control authority. My Department is working closely with the sector on this project in relation to training, compliance support, the IT enabler and a revised inspection policy of risk based targeted inspections, making more efficient and effective use of the resources available to carry out inspections.

Under section 159 of the Local Government Act 2001, it is the Chief Executive of each local authority who is responsible for the staffing and organisational arrangements necessary for carrying out the functions of the authority. My Department works closely with all local authorities and staffing sanction requests are dealt with on a case-by-case basis with priority given to housing-related posts, as well as those relating to health and safety and economic development. In that context, since 1 January 2015, my Department has approved over 800 housing-related staff sanction requests from local authorities. Additional supports are also being made available to local authorities to meet staffing costs associated with the delivery of their housing programmes.

Fines Data

1331. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the EU fines paid in each of the years 2015 to 2017, inclusive, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25735/18]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): My Department made no payments of this nature in the period 2015-17.

Shooting Rights

1332. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht her views on a matter (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter.

[24990/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josephine Madigan): The Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Water Birds (AEWA) was developed under the UN Convention on Migratory Species. Ireland signed up to the Agreement in 2003. The agreement includes a commitment that “Parties shall endeavour to phase out the use of the “ammunition referred in Question” for hunting in wetlands as soon as possible in accordance with self-imposed and published timetables.”

My Department is aware that the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) has, at the request of the European Commission, prepared a report proposing a restriction on the types of shooting within a wetland or where spent ammunition would land within a wetland. It is expected that the ECHA will forward its proposals to the Commission by mid-2018 for consideration. My Department has no specific proposals in relation to such ammunition at present and will await the final proposals from the European Commission before deciding in consultation with the various hunting organisations on any course of action which may be necessary.

I would point out that any restriction on the use of such ammunition over wetlands should not impact unduly on licensed deer hunters as wetlands are not the natural habitat of deer and it is rare for deer to be hunted over them.

National Parks and Wildlife Service Staff

1333. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if a National Parks and Wildlife Service, NPWS, employee (details supplied) in County Kerry will be permitted to remain in their position after their 65th birthday; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [24265/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josephine Madigan): I have been advised by officials in my Department that any Officer wishing to remain in service after the official retiring age of 65 may make an application for retention for a period of up to one year under the terms of Circular 21/2017 (A Temporary Circular to allow for certain Civil Servants to be retained beyond their Compulsory Retirement Age of 65 years until they reach the age of eligibility for the Contributory State Pension).

Animal Welfare

1334. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if an exemption to the regulations applied to a facility (details supplied) in County Kerry will be provided; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [24533/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josephine Madigan): My Department is responsible for implementing EU law, and specifically the European Communities (Licensing and Inspection of Zoos) Regulations 2003 (S.I. No 440 of 2003). My Department has a statutory role to ensure all premises identified as zoos in Ireland are inspected and licensed, if appropriate, each year.

The Irish Standards of Modern Zoo Practice (ISMZP), published by my Department in 2016, support the legislation and provide clarity to zoos on what is expected of them in order to be in compliance with the existing legislative and policy framework. Any premises that exhibits to the public animals of wild species for more than 7 days a year is classed as a zoo for the

purpose of the legislation.

At present, 83 establishments that meet this definition of a zoo have been identified in the State. 61 have either licences or exemptions and the remaining establishments will be licensed or exempted this year. My Department has not received an application for an exemption from the facility referred to in the question.

As a licensed zoo, the facility was scheduled to be inspected on the 14th June 2018. However, the owners contacted my Department on the 29th May, stating that they would no longer open to the public and requesting that the inspection be cancelled. Officials from the National Parks and Wildlife Service are in contact with the owners on this matter.

I would stress that my Department does not necessarily expect that all zoos will meet all the required standards on the first inspection. The zoo inspectorate works closely with zoos on an achievable and agreed plan to bring them up to the standard required and ensure the best possible conditions for animal populations and also to ensure that wider biodiversity and conservation objectives are realized. My Department plays an important role in monitoring zoos and setting policy and guidelines that help raise standards across the sector, benefitting the animal populations in the zoos and ensuring health and safety standards are maintained for all staff and visitors.

Programme for Government Implementation

1335. Deputy Micheál Martin asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the status of the implementation of the Programme for Partnership Government as it applies to her Department; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [24573/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josephine Madigan): As the Taoiseach advised the House on Wednesday 30th May last, the Government has recently approved the second Programme for a Partnership Government annual report which provides a comprehensive update on progress since May 2017. The report will be laid before the Oireachtas in the near future.

In addition to highlighting progress on the specific plans put in place to tackle issues, in the short and longer terms, in the areas of housing, homelessness, education, rural and regional development, job creation, broadband, agriculture and climate action, this report will reflect the progress achieved in relation to those commitments coming within the remit of my Department.

These include the progress of the Creative Ireland Programme, the implementation of the *20 Year Strategy for the Irish Language* and the commitment for capital investment of almost €1.2 billion in Ireland's culture, language and heritage under *Investing in Our Culture, Language and Heritage 2018 – 2027*. Details of this ten year plan, to be undertaken as part of Project Ireland 2040, were announced by the Taoiseach, the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform and myself in April.

Road Projects Status

1336. Deputy Tony McLoughlin asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the status of an application made by Sligo County Council in April 2018 seeking funds to carry out repair works on the L-7506-0 on Coney Island, County Sligo; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [24663/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Joe McHugh): My Department received an application on 1 May 2018 for funding towards improvement of the road referred to by the Deputy. This was in response to an invitation to Sligo County Council to submit an application for co-funding for island infrastructure works.

This application, along with applications from other County Councils, is currently being evaluated by my Department. A decision in this regard will be made shortly.

Heritage Council Funding

1337. Deputy Pat Casey asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the budget allocation to the Heritage Council in each year since 2008, in tabular form (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [24715/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): 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 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.

Capital	Current	Total
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

Capital	Current	Total
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
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

Turf Cutting Compensation Scheme Applications

1338. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht when a person (details supplied) will be compensated for cessation of turf-cutting on their site, as per agreement with her Department; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [24900/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): An application for compensation under the cessation of turf cutting compensation scheme has been received by my Department from the individual referred to in the Deputy's Question. With respect to 36 raised bog natural heritage area sites, the qualifying criteria for the scheme are that:

- The applicant must have had a legal interest (ownership or a turbary right (right to cut turf)) in one of these sites on 25 May 2010 and must have had the right to cut and remove turf from the property on that date;
- The applicant must have been cutting turf on the land in question during the relevant five year period up to 14 January 2014;
- The turf resource on the site has not been exhausted; and
- No turf cutting or associated activity is ongoing on the property.

The applicant was paid for Year 1 of the scheme (2014) in September 2014. I am advised that a report on an inspection of the plot of bog relevant to the application has recently been received and the application has now been processed. Consequently, the application has now been approved for payment for Year 2 (2015), Year 3 (2016), Year 4 (2017) and Year 5 (2018) of the scheme. Payment will issue to the applicant's bank account shortly.

Irish Music Industry Promotion

1339. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if her Department has a policy, strategy and budget in respect of the development of music for screen here; her plans to develop cultural capital in this sector; if her attention has been drawn

to the fact that much of the music composition and performance contained in section 481 productions is sourced abroad; if she will consider amending section 481 to rebalance more screen composition and performance here; if the sector will be included in a report (details supplied) that is to be published shortly; and when this report will be published. [24947/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): Section 481 Tax Relief is matter for my colleague the Minister for Finance. Section 481 is a critical support for the Irish audiovisual industry. The present scheme will expire at the end of 2020 and the Department of Finance is reviewing Section 481 in advance of a decision on its extension beyond 2020.

The Pillar 4 of Creative Ireland Programme focuses on Ireland's potential to be a global leader in film production, TV drama, documentary, children's storytelling and animation. Central to this pillar is the production of an Audiovisual Action Plan which will aim to put in place a strategic and coherent approach to making Ireland a leader in this sector. The Departments of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht; Communications, Climate Action and Environment; and Business, Enterprise and Innovation and their agencies are key partners in this Action Plan.

The Audiovisual Action Plan is being produced out of a number of key inputs including:

- a. The report by Olsberg SPI with Nordicity (OSN Report) on an economic analysis of the Irish audiovisual sector together with policy recommendations which was commissioned by the key partners described above.
- b. The outcomes of the Media Production Workshop at the Royal Hospital Kilmainham, hosted by my Department last year, which was attended by over 150 representatives of the film, broadcast and animation sectors.
- c. The report on a *Strategy for the Development of Skills for the Audiovisual industry in Ireland*, which was commissioned jointly by the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland and the Irish Film Board, prepared by consultants Crowe Horwath.

This Audiovisual Action Plan will set out an agenda to further develop the Irish Audiovisual Industry and in that context my Department will work with the Film Board and all sectors of the industry to address any barriers to continued success.

The Government's capital investment plan *Investing in our Culture, Language and Heritage 2018-2027* provides for funding of €200m to be invested in media production and audio visual industries through the Irish Film Board over the next 10 years, which will have a positive impact right across the country.

This will assist in realising the vision under Pillar 4 of the Creative Ireland Programme to develop Ireland as a centre of excellence in media production. The proposed Action Plan for the Audiovisual Industry will set out in greater detail how it is proposed to develop the industry further. I intend to publish this Action Plan and economic report shortly.

Departmental Expenditure

1340. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the spending on the programmes and projects since 2008 under headings (details supplied). [24948/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy

Joe McHugh: The information requested by the Deputy is published in both the Revised Estimates Volume and the Annual Report and Accounts of Údarás na Gaeltachta, both of which are laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas annually.

Commemorative Events

1341. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht when the all-party consultation group on commemorations will be re-established; her plans to proceed with convening the first meeting (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25045/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josephine Madigan): I intend to convene a meeting of the All-Party Group within the next few weeks.

Scéim na gCúntóirí Teanga

1342. D'fhiadfraigheadh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Cultúir, Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta cén fáth nach mbeidh cúntóirí teanga breise á gcur ar fáil Meán Fómhair seo chugainn i scoileanna ina bhfuil gá leo agus atá páirteach sa Scéim Aitheantais mar Scoil Ghaeltachta; agus an ndéanfaidh sí ráiteas ina thaobh. [25071/18]

1343. D'fhiadfraigheadh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Cultúir, Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta cén fáth a bhfuil cúntóirí teanga breise geallta ó Mheán Fómhair seo chugainn do roinnt scoileanna nach bhfuil páirteach sa Scéim Aitheantais mar Scoil Ghaeltachta; agus an ndéanfaidh sí ráiteas ina thaobh. [25072/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Joe McHugh): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1342 and 1343 together.

Níl aon fógra déanta agam fós maidir leis na scoileanna a bheidh ag fáil tacaíochta faoi Scéim na gCúntóirí Teanga don scoilbhliain 2018/19.

I láthair na huaire, tá mo Roinn ag tabhairt faoi athbhreithniú ar *Scéim na gCúntóirí Teanga* lena chinntiú go bhfuil an scéim ag feidhmiú ar an gcaoi is fearr is féidir mar thaca don Phróiseas Pleanála Teanga agus an Pholasaí don Oideachas Gaeltachta araon. Is é Lárionad Taighde agus Foghlama Ollscoil Chathair Bhaile Átha Cliath atá i mbun an athbreithnithe tar ceann na Roinne.

Mar is iondúil ag an tráth seo den bhliain, tá na socruithe idir lámha faoi láthair ag mo Roinn, i gcomhar leis na páirtithe leasmhara atá ag plé le riart na scéime thar ceann na Roinne, i dtreo allúntas na scoilbhliana 2018/2019 a fhogairt go luath.

Is féidir leis an Teachta glacadh leis gur i dtreo cur leis an líon scoileanna atá aitheanta faoi *Scéim na gCúntóirí Teanga*, agus í a threisiú tuilleadh de thoradh an athbhreithnithe, atá mo Roinn ag diriú i rith an ama.

Heritage Council Funding

1344. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the funding allocation to the Heritage Council in each of the years 2008 to 2017, inclusive, and

to date in 2018. [25096/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): I refer the Deputy to my answer to Parliamentary Question No. 642 of 29 May 2018, reference No. 23114/18. The position has not changed.

Commencement of Legislation

1345. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the sections and parts of all legislation brought forward by her Department in each of the past four years that have yet to be commenced; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25174/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): There are no sections or parts of legislation brought forward by my Department in the last four years that have yet to be commenced.

Archaeological Sites

1346. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if a community heritage and tourism facility will be put in place at Mayne in view of the High Court decision to cease the destruction of the Mayne Bog (details supplied). [25257/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): I refer the Deputy to my reply to Questions Nos. 660 and 661 on 28 March 2018 in which I set out my Department's significant input and involvement in the safeguarding of the toghers, or ancient trackways, discovered at Mayne.

Over the years the Department has liaised with and provided archaeological advice and information to local heritage groups, the local authority and the landowner and has itself commissioned a series of archaeological surveys of the finds. The fundamental objective has been to protect and preserve the toghers and I am satisfied that the measures being taken represent the best approach to securing an optimal outcome in that regard.

The provision of visitor facilities by the State at archaeological monument sites is a function of the Office of Public Works (OPW) rather than of my own Department. Such facilities are put in place by OPW at the more significant locations that are in my ownership or guardianship, as Minister, under the National Monuments Acts. The Mayne togher site is not in state care and is privately owned. I am advised that the Glendalough and Ballycroy facilities instanced by the Deputy, which are managed by OPW and my Department's National Parks and Wildlife Service respectively, both involve substantial capital investments with significant ongoing running costs.

I fully appreciate the local and wider public interest there is in the Mayne toghers and it may be that the local authority, assisted perhaps by local groups, might be interested in helping with the presentation of the site. I am happy to confirm that my Department's National Monuments Service will be available to assist and guide the Council in that regard if required.

National Parks and Wildlife Service

1347. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if she will examine a matter (details supplied) on refugees who wish to volunteer; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25290/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josephine Madigan): My Department regularly has volunteers assisting in the work of the National Parks and Wildlife side, and I have drawn the attention of local management in Killarney to this welcome offer.

Heritage Schemes

1348. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the reason the heritage in schools scheme was recently closed for bookings. [25349/18]

1349. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if funding for the heritage in schools scheme was reduced in 2018; if so, the extent of the reduction; the reason for same; and the budget for the scheme following this reduction. [25350/18]

1350. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if costs relating to oversight of the heritage in schools scheme increased in 2018; and if so, the reason for same. [25351/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josephine Madigan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1348 to 1350, inclusive, together.

The Heritage Council, which is funded by my Department, is independent in the performance of its functions.

In 2018, I allocated funding of €6.377M to the Heritage Council. This is 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.

I am informed by the Heritage Council that the amount allocated for Heritage in Schools increased from €255,000 in 2016 to €300,000 in 2017. On the basis of information currently available, and depending on uptake of planned bookings in the course of the year, the Council expects to spend over €315,000 on the scheme in 2018. That's an increase of almost 24% in two years.

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.

I understand that Heritage in Schools is fully booked for this year. I also understand, however, that the Heritage Council is examining whether it can identify further funding to allow the Programme to expand and meet increased demand. The Heritage Council plans to develop the Programme further as part of its new Strategic Plan which will be published shortly.

In relation to the costs of oversight of the programme, I am informed that there has been no increase in 2018 compared to 2017. Changes were made to the programme in 2017, arising from the recommendations of an independent review of the scheme commissioned by the Heritage Council and completed in August 2016. These included the appointment of a project manager.

More detailed information on this Programme and the Heritage Council's other activities is available on its website www.heritagencouncil.ie or by contacting the Council directly.

Departmental Funding

1351. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht her Department's capital allocation in each of the years 2019 to 2023; and the areas to which funds will be allocated in each of those years. [25567/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josephine Madigan): The capital allocation for my Department in each of the years 2019 to 2022 is as follows:

- €75 million in 2019;
- €76 million in 2020;
- €80 million in 2021; and
- €110 million in 2022.

Details of the specific capital allocation for 2023 are not currently available.

With regard to the break out of capital allocations for the years 2019 – 2023, this has not yet been finalised as investments over the period are subject to appraisal and evaluation in line with the Public Spending Code. The broad capital allocations for projects and programmes are set out in my Department's 10 Year Plan, "Investing in our Culture, Language & Heritage 2018 – 2027", at https://www.chg.gov.ie/app/uploads/2018/04/capital_plan_april3-8.pdf which explicitly recognises that our culture, language and heritage are an essential part of the sustainable development of the country.

More details on the individual projects and programmes will emerge as we go through the process of appraising, evaluating and planning for these important investments. The final disaggregation will be completed as part of the annual Estimates process for each of the years in question.

Architectural Heritage

1352. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if a building that is deemed not to have significant architectural heritage value can be removed from the national inventory of architectural heritage list; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25617/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josephine Madigan): The National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) was established by the Architectural Heritage (National Inventory) and Historic Monuments (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1999. It is a national initiative administered by my Department.

The purpose of the NIAH is to identify, record, and evaluate the post-1700 architectural heritage of Ireland as an aid in its protection. NIAH surveys provide the basis for the recommendations made by me, under Section 53 of the Planning & Development Act 2000 (as amended), to the planning authorities for the inclusion of particular structures in their Record of Protected Structures (RPS).

Under the Architectural Heritage (National Inventory) and Historic Monuments (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1999 an entry in the NIAH may be amended or deleted. This can be done by the owner of the structure making a case to my Department. Each case is considered on its individual merits.

Seismic Surveys

1353. Deputy Eamon Ryan asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if her Department will be making changes to National Parks and Wildlife Service guidelines for ocean seismic testing in view of new evidence published in 2017 and 2018 on the deadly impacts it can have on krill and zooplankton populations; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25696/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josephine Madigan): My Department published guidelines in 2014 on the assessment of risk and mitigation measures in regard to high intensity noise in the marine environment and its impact on protected cetacean species. Neither krill nor zooplankton are protected under the Wildlife Acts or EU Nature Directives but are of course an important constituent of the food and food chain of protected cetaceans.

My Department is not the regulatory authority for ocean seismic activity. It takes on board new scientific information on impacts on protected species and can, when the evidence is fully scientifically reviewed, provide advice to the appropriate authorities.

EU Data

1354. Deputy Michael McGrath asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the EU fines paid in each of the years 2015 to 2017, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25729/18]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josephine Madigan): I am advised that my Department has not been subject to any EU fines during the period specified by the Deputy.