

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 10, inclusive, answered orally.

Questions Nos. 11 to 18, inclusive, resubmitted.

Questions Nos. 19 to 26, inclusive, answered orally.

Adoption Records Provision

27. **Deputy Paul Murphy** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the actions being taken to inform and redress those impacted by the false recording of adoptions; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25686/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): On foot of the recent discovery by Tusla of 126 cases of illegal registrations I moved immediately to inform the Cabinet. I also announced that a process has been put in place by Tusla to manage these cases. This is being led by experienced information and tracing social workers.

As an immediate step Tusla put in place a Helpline which is operating from 10am to 4 pm Monday to Friday. Tusla has also put relevant information on its website.

Each of the 126 cases has been assigned to a social worker and work has commenced on tracing the people concerned. These include the person who was illegally registered as a child, the birth mother and the people who participated in the illegal registration and subsequently raised these children as their own.

The majority of the files containing information are more than 50 years old. The implication of this is of course, that the information in the files is over 50 years old. Some of the information was deliberately falsified. People have changed addresses. Some have emigrated. Many are no longer alive.

Each file is being examined. Information is being checked and updated where possible. Some files will be more difficult to update than others but strenuous efforts are being made on every file.

The process of offering contact and support to those affected will be handled very carefully. It will take account of each individual's requirements. Some people may not wish to have any contact. Others may wish to take their time in engaging. I expect that there are others who may accept contact and support at the earliest opportunity.

Offers of contact and support will begin at the end of the month in cases where there is sufficient information available to establish contact.

My focus in the first instance is the provision of information and support. People have a right to their identity. They have a right to honest answers and we have a duty to provide this if possible.

The question of redress does not arise at this point in the process.

Questions Nos. 28 to 30, inclusive, answered orally.

Child Care Law Reporting Project

31. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the steps she will take to address the issues raised in the recently published child care law reporting project study; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25561/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I welcome the publication of the latest report of the Child Care Law Reporting Project, which deals with lengthy, contested and complex child protection cases in the District Court.

The report's author, Dr Carol Coulter, notes that the issues raised cannot be solved by one branch of Government alone. They require co-ordinated action from the Department of Justice and Equality, the Courts Service, the legal profession, Tusla, and my own Department.

The Recommendations include: the need for Tusla to try too identify potentially complicated cases early on, and to develop a strategy to deal with them; the need for a unified national legal strategy in child protection cases; and the provision of national training for social worker to help strengthen their analytical abilities relating to legal issues.

I have been assured by Tusla that all of the recommendations are being given full consideration by senior management. A number of ongoing reforms will address the key recommendation for better awareness of complex cases at all management levels.

Tusla has also informed me that Signs of Safety and the Empowering Practice and Practitioner Initiative are being rolled out. It is anticipated that this will help to reduce the number of protracted court processes by requiring social workers to proactively work with families towards a solution, before considering an intervention.

As the Deputy will be aware, Tusla are working with the Gardaí to develop and implement joint protocols on data sharing, specialist interviewing, and the investigation of child sex abuse. This, it is hoped, will increase efficiencies and reduce delays in finalising these cases.

I also plan to develop an Irish approach to the Barnahus and Child Advocacy Centre models for services to children who have suffered sexual abuse. The centres to be established will support children who have suffered sexual abuse in a way that would minimise their trauma while accessing protective, therapeutic or health services, and engaging with the criminal justice system.

The first meeting of the Cross Agency Interdepartmental group, which I established together with my colleagues Minister for Justice and Equality and Minister for Health, to examine the development of an Irish model for children who suffered child sexual abuse, was held in February 2018. The Group is working towards establishing dedicated Cross Agency centres for these children, in line with best international practice and standards. The Group continues to meet

regularly to progress this work.

The Child Care Law Reporting Project was established to bring transparency to child care proceedings, and to collect information that will assist in the better operation of the Child Care Act 1991.

The Report, and the recent submission from Dr Coulter, will assist my Department in the review of this Act, and its findings will help ensure that any new child protection and welfare legislation will work for the benefit of our most vulnerable children.

Finally, I am delighted to confirm that the Project will be funded by my Department for another three years. I look forward to more concise and empirical research on this very important topic.

[PQ Ref No. 25561/18]

Illegal Adoptions

32. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if the sampling exercise of adoption records held by Tusla and the Adoption Authority of Ireland will be extended to include all forms of illegal adoption and not just illegal birth registrations. [25562/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Deputy Wallace has raised the question of whether our further analysis of illegal registrations will also cover illegal adoptions.

I have checked the UN definition of illegal adoptions.

It is: “Adoptions resulting from crimes such as abduction and sale of and trafficking in children, fraud in the declaration of adoptability, falsification of official documents or coercion, and any illicit activity or practice such as lack of proper consent by biological parents, improper financial gain by intermediaries and related corruption”.

The analysis that I have now commenced is looking at the falsification of official documents, as well as illicit activity and practice such as lack of proper consent by biological parents in the cases where their children were illegally registered.

I accept that “proper consent” could also cover forced consent and consent from young women and girls who were underage.

The Mother and Baby Homes Commission of Investigation is examining practices in the cases of mothers and children who were resident in specified institutions within its terms of reference. It is also examining the interaction of Mother and Baby Homes with other institutions, organisations and individuals involved with children from these institutions.

Some of the mothers were children themselves. This may uncover practices such as the lack of proper consent and also consent given by girls who were underage. The Commission can also examine whether there was improper financial gain by intermediaries or evidence of related corruption.

I think it would be helpful to see what the findings of the Commission are in respect of illegal adoptions, as defined by the United Nations. It may help us to understand what specific evidence exists and what we would need to look for should we embark on a more expansive

analysis of forced and underage consent of adoptions.

At this point in time, I think it would be very difficult to broaden the analysis of illegal registrations to cover these children. The children we are focussed on, in terms of the further analysis we are doing, are now adults. They do not know that the people they considered to be their parents are not their parents. They have had their identity stolen.

Foster Care Policy

33. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the measures she is taking to address concerns raised by the Health Information and Quality Authority which found significant levels of non-compliance in foster care standards; if such concerns extend to County Tipperary; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25321/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I thank the Deputy for his important question. When an inspection is carried out by HIQA, the process requires the service inspected to develop an Action Plan in response to the findings made by Inspectors.

This Action Plan is agreed with HIQA in advance of the publication of the report. All elements of the Action Plans are time-bound, and a designated Tusla official is responsible for executing the Plan.

HIQA undertakes follow-up inspections to examine the progress being made against Action Plans.

In 2017, HIQA carried out themed inspections across the 17 Tusla areas, in the area of foster care. The inspections assessed the recruitment, assessment, approval, supervision and review of foster carers and inspected against eight of the 27 Standards in Foster Care.

A number of positive findings were reported. Assessments of foster carers were of good quality, as were supports for foster carers caring for children with complex needs, and reviews of ongoing placements. Families with allocated link workers were satisfied with the quality of the service and support they received.

The Deputy will be aware that County Tipperary falls within two of the Tusla regions - the MidWest, and the region of Carlow/Kilkenny/South Tipperary.

HIQA published inspection reports for these regions in August and October 2017, respectively.

HIQA found that aspects of the standards were not met in both areas. The clear themes coming through were the need for better oversight by the Foster Care Committee, how the overall system is working, management of complaints and allegations, recruitment of staff, the replenishment and broadening of foster care panels, improved supports and supervision of foster carers.

By and large children in foster care do well and that is in large part due to the dedication of the foster carers, supported by their social work team. However, HIQA raises some consistent and worrying concerns. I, and my officials, are actively engaging with Tusla with a view to addressing the findings in HIQA reports and delivering the best possible service to children in foster care.

I am pleased to note that HIQA accepted Tusla's action plans in relation to the inspection reports in both areas.

I value the work that HIQA does to assess and monitor the quality of the foster care service provided by Tusla. In future inspections HIQA will, I understand, speak directly with children in foster care placements, so that we can learn from their views and experiences.

Illegal Adoptions

34. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the extent to which she can facilitate a comprehensive evaluation of the extent to which children were illegally adopted, removed from their natural parents and in some cases transported to other jurisdictions in return for a fee in the past; if such activities have been detected as being ongoing in recent times; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25658/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The Deputy will be aware that I have commenced a further analysis of illegal registrations following on from the announcement that Tusla, the Child and Family Agency had identified 126 cases where births were illegally registered between 1946 and 1969 by St Patrick's Guild adoption agency.

This analysis will seek to establish if there is further evidence of illegal registrations in the records of other adoption agencies. There are 150,000 records at issue and of these, there are 100,000 currently in the custody of the Adoption Authority of Ireland and Tusla.

If this analysis indicates evidence of illegal registrations then we will undertake a deeper, more extensive analysis of the records.

The information that this process may uncover is life-changing for the individuals affected. During every stage of this process, their right to their identity will be the key determinant of the next steps that we take.

The issue raised by the Deputy of children transported to other jurisdictions, and the payment of fees/donations in relation to the placement of children, are other features of our history which are already in the public domain.

Indeed in approximately 20 of the current 126 identified cases of illegal registrations, the children were subsequently brought outside the jurisdiction. The people affected in these cases also have an assigned social worker and will be offered contact and support.

In relation to the Deputy's question about whether such activities are ongoing in recent times, I understand that in relation to intercountry adoption, the payment of "reasonable" expenses is allowed.

Finally, the Deputy may be interested in the work of the Mother and Baby Homes Commission which is examining adoption practices in the cases of mothers and children who were resident in specified institutions within its terms of reference. The Commission is also examining the interaction of Mother and Baby Homes with other institutions, organisations and individuals involved with the placement of children from these institutions.

The Social History module which will form part of the Mother and Baby Homes Commission's final report should prove to be a very valuable insight into our past treatment of mothers and their children in Ireland.

Homeless Persons Supports

35. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the aims of the joint protocol with the Dublin Regional Homeless Executive regarding additional supports for children in emergency accommodation; the number of referrals; and if she is satisfied with the operation. [25450/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): While ultimate responsibility for managing homelessness rests with the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, Tusla, is determined to do its part to alleviate the difficulties endured by children and families experiencing homelessness. It works closely with my Department in this regard.

Tusla has an important role to play in regard to a number of elements of the National Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness. It is represented on a number of key interagency fora, including the Homelessness Interagency Group and the Dublin Joint Consultative Forum alongside the Dublin Region Homeless Executive (DRHE).

I am pleased to confirm that the joint protocol is fully operational. I want to replicate this form of Inter-agency co-operation nationally.

Tusla and the DRHE have agreed a joint protocol to facilitate an inter-agency response to the many challenges posed by homelessness. The main aim of the joint protocol is to work in partnership to address the family support needs of homeless families and to promote inter-agency cooperation.

As part of the protocol, Tusla provides support to the DHRE's 'one-stop-shop' assessment centres. Here the role of Tusla staff is to participate as required with regard to issues involving child protection and welfare, educational welfare and Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence (DSGBV) services.

Referrals received from Case Workers located in Assessment Centres are responded to as appropriate. The Tusla Homelessness Liaison Officer provides broad-based supports to the centres.

Tusla is also working together with the DHRE and the Family Resource Centres, themselves part-funded by Tusla, to coordinate family support services for families in family hubs and other forms of emergency accommodation.

Tusla collects a broad range of data and information relating to child protection. However, Tusla does not currently collect national metrics on homeless families.

Direct Provision System

36. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she is satisfied that enough supports are in place for children in direct provision; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25452/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The Child Care Act, 1991 applies to all children resident in the State, regardless of their immigration status. Under the Child Care Act, 1991 and the Child and Family Agency Act 2013, Tusla has a duty to promote the welfare of children who are not receiving adequate care or protection.

The Agency is obliged to provide care for these children for as long as their welfare requires it. It should be noted that children living in direct provision are in the care of their parent(s).

13 June 2018

My colleague, the Minister of Justice and Equality has responsibility for the direct provision service, which is provided through a dedicated Reception and Integration Agency. Senior officials from my Department are currently engaged with the Department of Justice and Equality on the development of Standards for Direct Provision Centres, and I look forward to the results of this work.

A senior social worker from Tusla is seconded to the Reception and Integration Agency, providing social work advice to the Agency, and working directly with Direct Provision Centres to develop their child safeguarding practices and links to community supports.

Concerns about the welfare, safety or well-being of a child in direct provision are reported to Tusla, in line with Children First Legislation.

A range of professionals including teachers, nurses, early years educators, gardaí and other health professionals, who see children regularly, are in a good position to identify children where there are welfare or safety issues.

The Children First Act, 2015 places a statutory obligation on key professionals, such as those I have named, to report concerns of harm above a defined threshold, to Tusla without delay.

Direct Provision Centre managers are categorised as Designated Persons under Children First, and so are required to make mandatory reports of concerns relating to children resident in their centres.

Direct Provision Centres are also required to have child safeguarding statements and practices in place.

Unaccompanied, asylum-seeking children who seek the assistance of the State are placed in the statutory care of Tusla. Their needs are assessed by an allocated a social worker from a specialist team who work exclusively with unaccompanied minors. They receive appropriate educational, social, medical and counselling support.

Domestic Violence Refuges Provision

37. **Deputy Denise Mitchell** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if the funding for a refuge (details supplied) is to be increased due to the significant increase in demand for the service in view of the fact that the funding for the counselling service was cut in the past. [25556/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): 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.

In 2018, Tusla is providing €23.8 million in funding to domestic, sexual and gender-based violence services, an increase of €1.7m over 2017 funding.

This includes funding for some 58 services throughout the country that offer a range of emergency accommodation and community-based supports to individuals and families affected by domestic, sexual and gender-based violence. Many of these supports include counselling.

I was delighted to avail of the opportunity to visit the centre in question, on the invitation of your colleague, Deputy Funchion, earlier this year. I support and value the work of these services. I understand that Tusla has identified a need for development and expansion of outreach

services in the region in question.

Tusla has also advised me that it has allocated additional funding to the centre in question for the development and expansion of outreach services in the centre's catchment area.

Tusla has also completed a needs analysis project in the region, which will inform its future plans for service delivery in those areas, as well as the commissioning of services and allocation of funding.

At present, I am not in a position to advise on the level of funding that will be available for services next year. This issue will be clarified in the context of the 2019 Estimates process, and having regard to the overall level of funding available to Tusla next year.

However, I can assure the Deputy that domestic, sexual and gender-based violence services are a priority for me.

It is important that the needs of victims and survivors of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence are met in the best way possible, with due attention to the quality, accessibility, and outcome of services.

Early Childhood Care and Education Data

38. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the actual demand for places under the early childhood care and education scheme in County Cork; the way in which deficits will be made up within individual local areas; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25640/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): A total of 2,805 children at services in Cork City and a further 12,557 children at services in Cork County have benefitted from the Early Childhood Care and Education scheme (ECCE) in the current year.

My Department, in conjunction with Pobal, reviews ECCE capacity on an ongoing basis and while there can be pressures in some immediate localities, all eligible children have been catered for. My Department also works closely with the local City and County Childcare Committees in this regard.

From September 2018, the ECCE Programme will revert to one single entry point in a given ECCE Programme Year (September). From this time, children will be entitled to two full years of ECCE provision. This meets the commitment given in the Programme for Government.

As regards capacity, and having regard to demographic trends, from September 2018, the number of ECCE enrolments in any given year will be in the region of 114,000. Given that 118,000 places are currently filled, no immediate capacity issues are expected for those children due to register for ECCE in September 2018.

In addition my Department has just announced the provision of €6.87m in capital supports in 2018 for the Early Years sector. This funding supports both capacity and quality initiatives.

Adoption Registration

39. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she has contacted all persons who were wrongly registered as biological children of adoptive par-

ents in respect of St. Patrick's Guild, Dublin; if she has instructed Tusla to review all historical records at the institution; if all records of other non-State adoption agencies and boards were contacted to determine if other similar false registrations were carried out in full rather than just a sample of same; her plans to review State bodies in respect of their historical adoption records; if her attention has been drawn to State bodies in which situations exist that merit investigation in respect of offering adoption services and or advice on same; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [24820/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): As the information that an incorrect birth registration has taken place is potentially life changing, the State has a responsibility to reach a high level of certainty that this has in fact happened, before it contacts the individuals concerned. This threshold has now been reached in the case of the 126 St Patrick's Guild files.

This is a very serious and sensitive issue. People have the right to know of their true origins and, where we have clear evidence, I believe we have an obligation to tell the people affected. Some may know already, but for others it will be entirely new and very difficult information indeed.

As an immediate step, Tusla has put in place a Helpline, operating from 10 to 4 each day, Monday to Friday, and has also put significant information on its website. Both will 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.

There will be a social worker-led process of making contact with those affected that can be identified. 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.

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.

In view of what has been found in a subset of the St Patrick's Guild records, those index cards marked 'Adoption from Birth', we need to know whether there may be similar evidence of incorrect registrations in the records of other adoption societies.

I have asked an Independent Reviewer to oversee a targeted sampling process of relevant records held by Tusla and the Adoption Authority in the first instance to see if we can establish clear evidence of incorrect registrations. Marion Reynolds is a former Deputy Director of Social Services in Northern Ireland. I am asking her to report to me within four months of the work commencing.

There are some 150,000 records at issue, of which 100,000 are currently in the custody of Tusla and the AAI. We need a well-planned sampling process first of the Tusla and AAI records to see if a major trawl of these is likely to give us hard evidence of incorrect registrations. Hard evidence is necessary before individuals can be informed.

Tusla found evidence in the St Patrick's Guild records primarily because of the marker adopted from birth on index cards. If this had not been present it would have been extremely difficult to identify even the 126 cases that they have found so far. I would sound a note of caution to say that it may not be the case that such a clear marker, or indeed any marker, will be found in any other files.

We must first judge the likely incidence of cases that can actually be identified, through the sampling exercise, and the scale of them. Then we can judge the next steps that may be required.

It is also worth noting that the Mother and Baby Homes Commission of Investigation is examining adoption practices in the cases of mothers and children who were resident in the specified institutions within its terms of reference.

Adoption Registration

40. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of the 126 persons affected by the St. Patrick's Guild adoption scandal who have now been informed of the false registration; if her Department and Tusla have asked An Garda Síochána to bring criminal charges against those involved in the St. Patrick's Guild false registration of births between 1946 and 1969; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [24860/18]

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 the information that an incorrect birth registration has taken place is potentially life changing, the State has a responsibility to reach a high level of certainty that this has in fact happened, before it contacts the individuals concerned. This threshold has now been reached in the case of the 126 St Patrick's Guild files.

This is a very serious and sensitive issue. People have the right to know of their true origins and, where we have clear evidence, I believe we have an obligation to tell the people affected. Some may know already, but for others it will be entirely new and very difficult information to receive and absorb.

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.

There will be a social worker-led process of making contact with those affected that can be identified. 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 to an experienced Tusla information and tracing social worker and work has already commenced on tracing the individuals concerned.

I would emphasise that the process will be measured, sensitive, and at the pace of the indi-

vidual 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.

I am confident that Tusla is prioritising these cases and committing the necessary resources. However, I would remind the Deputy that the only information available at the commencement of the process was in records that are in most cases over 50 years old, so the process of tracing people will take some time. It is not expected that Tusla will be in a position to start making contact with individuals until at least the end of this month.

In relation to the Deputy's question about criminal charges, on foot of their initial assessment, Tusla contacted an Garda Síochána and gave them full details of the issues of concern. The Gardaí requested, and were given, 10 sample files. It is my understanding that they are currently reviewing these cases.

Departmental Budgets

41. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the extent to which she remains satisfied regarding the adequacy of the budget available to her Department to cater for the full extent of her Department's responsibilities, including the protection of children, the monitoring of at risk cases and the follow-up as necessary; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25657/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Budget 2018 saw additional funding of €73 million being made available for child care and youth services bringing total investment by my Department in 2018 to €1.383 billion. The additional funding secures much needed additional resources for Tusla, the Child and Family Agency and provides a full second year of the ECCE free pre-school scheme. It also recognises the importance of improving conditions for our early years workforce.

Tusla has received an additional €40.6 million or a 5.7% increase which is additional to the €37 million increase it received in 2017. The total financial allocation to Tusla in 2018 is €754 million. This level of funding allows it progress a number of key priorities including the introduction of mandatory reporting under Children First, continue to address unallocated cases, address gaps in out of hours services and further invest in Family Resource Centres delivering services to families in disadvantaged areas across the country.

The additional funding for early years childcare is another significant step in ensuring access to high quality, affordable early years care and education. The total allocation to early years and childcare schemes for 2018 is €485 million. From September 2018, all children will be entitled to a full two years of the ECCE scheme or free pre-school, as it has become known. This is a further enhancement that delivers fully on a commitment in the Programme for Government that is good for children, families and Early Years providers.

A total of €62 million is being made available in 2018 to support the provision of youth services throughout the country including services for young people at risk of disadvantage.

I am satisfied that the significant resources secured for 2018 facilitates my Department and its agencies to build on the good work by all involved in working with children and families to deliver on this Government's commitment to fundamentally reform the delivery of services. I will continue to champion the need for further significant additional investment in all childcare services under the remit of my Department as we enter the Budget 2019 process and ensure that public funding is allocated efficiently, fairly and that it is targeted in the correct manner to

deliver the best results for children.

Adoption Records Provision

42. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if her Department will seek to seize records immediately in order to transfer them to a central location in which they can be fully audited and preserved in view of the scale of documents held by private adoption agencies; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25107/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): In view of what has been found in a subset of the St Patrick's Guild records, those index cards marked 'Adoption from Birth', we need to know whether there may be similar evidence of incorrect registrations in the records of other adoption societies.

I have asked an Independent Reviewer to oversee a targeted sampling process of relevant records held by Tusla and the Adoption Authority in the first instance to see if we can establish clear evidence of incorrect registrations. Marion Reynolds is a former Deputy Director of Social Services in Northern Ireland. I am asking her to report to me within four months of the work commencing.

There are some 150,000 records at issue, of which 100,000 are currently in the custody of Tusla and the Adoption Authority. We need a well-planned sampling process first of the Tusla and AAI records to see if a major trawl of these is likely to give us hard evidence of incorrect registrations. Hard evidence is necessary before individuals can be informed.

In relation to the remaining estimated 50,000 records that are not in the custody of either Tusla or the Adoption Authority, the Adoption (Information and Tracing) Bill 2016 provides for the transfer of these records to the custody of the Adoption Authority. The Bill also creates offences in relation to the concealment, destruction, mutilation and falsification of these records. I agree with the Deputy that the protection and collation of these records is of the utmost importance but the mechanism to achieve this is the enactment of the Bill. It is my intention to proceed as quickly as possible with the enactment of the information and tracing legislation.

Child and Family Agency Staff

43. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the estimated deficit in social workers working in or assigned to County Tipperary; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25320/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I wish to advise the Deputy that Tusla services are divided into four regions nationally and within each region there are local areas, with a total of 17 local areas nationally.

Tipperary is served by two areas:

- Carlow, Kilkenny and South Tipperary
- Limerick, Clare and North Tipperary

Tusla has informed me that as of 31 March 2018, there was a deficit of 5 Social Workers in the Carlow, Kilkenny and South Tipperary area and Tusla is currently in the process of recruiting for these posts.

For the same period, Tusla has informed me that there was a deficit of 10 Social Workers in the Limerick, Clare and North Tipperary area and Tusla is currently in the process of recruiting for these posts also and I understand that 3 posts have been accepted to date.

Questions Nos. 44 and 45 answered orally.

Illegal Adoptions

46. **Deputy Mick Barry** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of cases of illegal registrations and or illegal adoptions that have been reported to her Department by Tusla since 2014; and the number reported by the HSE prior to 2014. [25614/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): While there have been suspicions about the practice of incorrect registrations for many years, it has been extremely difficult to uncover clear evidence of the practice because of the deliberate failure by those involved to keep records. This clear evidence has only been found in the case of the 126 St Patrick's Guild files that I announced on 29th May last.

On that date 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 the information that an incorrect birth registration has taken place is potentially life changing, the State has a responsibility to reach a high level of certainty that this has in fact happened, before it contacts the individuals concerned. This threshold has now been reached in the case of the 126 St Patrick's Guild files. In the case of a further 16 St Patrick's Guild files, Tusla are still in the process of a validation exercise to assess whether evidence exists that an incorrect registration took place.

The AAI are currently engaged in a similar validation process in relation to approximately 140 cases where they have concerns that an incorrect registration may have taken place. If the threshold of evidence that an incorrect registration has taken place is reached in any of those cases, they will be added to the cases already being progressed by Tusla.

Children in Care

47. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she has taken steps to address the fact that many children in foster care are placed under a voluntary care order; and the issues arising from same. [25645/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Where a child is received into care, the first approach which is often considered is a voluntary care arrangement under Section 4 of the Child Care Act, 1991. The section places an obligation on Tusla,

the Child and Family Agency, to take a child into care where it is unlikely that the child would receive the required care and protection in any other way. It allows Tusla to receive a child into care without a court order, on the condition that it is not against the wishes of the parent or guardian to use this approach.

A voluntary care agreement may be appropriate in situations such as when a parent requires medical or other treatment for a time limited period. Social workers review a child in care's situation at statutory child in care reviews, in consultation with the child's parents and other professionals.

If it is not possible to reach an agreement with a parent or guardian, or the parent or guardian seeks to resume care of the child, it may be necessary for Tusla to seek a direction or an order from the Courts. The decision to make an application to the Courts is a serious step and Tusla makes every effort to identify supports or actions that could act as an alternate approach.

In light of this, I do not believe that steps are needed to reduce the numbers of children being received in to the voluntary care of Tusla with the agreement of their parents. My Department is undertaking a review of the Child Care Act 1991 and submissions on this aspect of the legislation are being considered.

Internet Safety

48. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the steps she has taken to enact the recommendations of the Internet content governance advisory council; if additional steps will be taken to ensure the safety of children online; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25646/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The Internet Content Governance Advisory Group (ICGAG) was established in 2013 by the then Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources.

The purpose was to assess existing provisions for safer and better internet strategies. The report of the ICGAG included a number of recommendations which have application across various Government Departments.

The Deputy will appreciate that I do not have lead Ministerial policy responsibility for internet safety. In the circumstances I do not propose to comment on the individual recommendations in the report.

However, I have significant responsibilities, as part of a cross-Government approach, in ensuring that the internet is a safer place for children.

In this regard, the Children First Act, 2015 places statutory obligations on organisations providing relevant services to children, including the preparation of a Child Safeguarding Statement. My Department will be amending the Children First Guidance to include a specific reference to online safety in the preparation of the Statement before the end of the second quarter of 2019.

It is also important to ensure that the voices of children and young people are heard and acted upon when we make decisions on internet safety. In this context my Department undertakes and supports a wide range of consultation and participation processes with children and young people through Dáil na nÓg and Comhairle na nÓg.

My Department also provides funding to three national youth organisations which provide on-line safety resources for the youth sector. They are the National Youth Council of Ireland, Spunout - Ireland's Youth Information website, and Youth Work Ireland.

Parents have a crucial role in ensuring that children are safe online. Providing information and services to parents is part of the role of my Department, particularly through the Child and Family Agency, and through community and voluntary sector organisations.

This will be a key focus for the Department in the coming years. I will be outlining steps in that regard in the Early Years Strategy.

In terms of Government action, the Department of the Taoiseach is currently developing an Action Plan on online safety. This will take into account the recent Report of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Children and Youth Affairs entitled Cyber Security for Children and Young Adults and concerns highlighted in the ICGAG Report.

I am fully committed to playing my part in a co-ordinated cross-Government approach to dealing with this issue, particularly as it relates to children.

Early Childhood Care and Education Staff

49. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she will report on the possible inclusion of child minders in the ECCE scheme and their value as additional options for parents; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25451/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Childminders who are registered with Tusla and have a minimum Level 6 qualification in childcare (a list of recognised qualifications are available on www.dcy.gov.ie) are eligible to provide the ECCE programme.

Under the ECCE programme rules, there must be a minimum of eight ECCE-eligible children in an ECCE session. Childminders must apply for an exemption from this requirement and will be approved where they have five ECCE-eligible children.

An expert working group report on child-minding was presented to me on 26 March 2018 which makes important recommendations on the childminding sector. The report, Pathway to a Quality Support and Assurance System for Childminding in Ireland, outlines a vision for the development of the childminding sector over the next decade. DCYA is currently considering the recommendations contained in the report and it is anticipated that an action plan containing short, medium, and long-term goals for the sector will be published within the next year. This action plan will inform the direction of the development of the childminding sector and various supports, including whether or not ECCE is suitable long-term for childminders.

Community Childcare Subvention Programme

50. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs her plans to increase substantially the maximum level of grant aid in respect of the provision of new childcare facilities in cases in which there is an identified need for additional places and in which the maximum level of grant aid under the present scheme would be inadequate to support a community childcare organisation to provide accommodation; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25641/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Community childcare services has always been a key priority of my Department's capital programmes. This year, over €1.16m in capital funding was allocated specifically to community services nationwide for the purpose of creating new additional childcare places. Of this, €0.93m was allocated to community early years services, in twenty separate individual grants, as part of Early Years Strand 1 Capital. This will result in the creation of 396 new childcare places, of which 137 are for 0-3 year olds and 259 are ECCE.

A further €0.23m in funding was allocated to community school age services, in fourteen separate individual grants, as part of School Age Strand 4 Capital. This will result in the creation of 232 new school age places.

This year, the maximum individual grant award available to services was €50,000 and €20,000 for Strand 1 and Strand 4, respectively.

As well as this, Strands 2 and 5 are available exclusively to community services to support essential maintenance and repair of community facilities, exemplifying my broader commitment to assisting community-based providers through capital funding. This year, €1.25m has been committed across both strands for this purpose.

As you may know, I recently ensured that childcare was identified as a strategic priority in the National Development Plan 2018-2027. As part of this, €250m in additional capital funding is allocated for the childcare sector over the duration of the plan.

Research is currently underway in my Department regarding specific capital need, both present and future, in the childcare sector and this will inform capital investment in the coming years.

As part of the capital commitment of the National Development Plan, the possibility exists of funding significantly larger capital projects than currently pursued under the single-year programmes. However, the exact shape of my Department's future capital undertakings is still under consideration.

Affordable Childcare Scheme Implementation

51. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if the affordable childcare scheme is on target to launch in September 2019; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25639/18]

56. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the status of the affordable childcare scheme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [24819/18]

58. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the status of the implementation of the affordable childcare scheme; when she expects it to be fully functioning; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25560/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I propose to take Questions Nos. 51, 56 and 58 together.

I am glad to report that my officials and I are making good progress in the development of the Affordable Childcare Scheme. This development involves intensive work across legislative, ICT, administrative, governance and communications areas.

With regard to the legislative progress, the Childcare Support Bill has now passed all sub-

stantive stages in both the Dail and the Seanad, garnering cross party support in both Houses. I hope to conclude the final technical stage of seeking Dáil confirmation of amendments made to the Bill in the Seanad next week, with a view to enactment of the legislation by the end of the month.

The Childcare Support Bill will be underpinned by detailed secondary legislation and formal policy guidelines. Work is currently ongoing on both of these and also on the development of regulations to provide, for the first time, for the registration of school age childcare services by the Tusla Early Years Inspectorate. These latter regulations will be introduced in advance of the Affordable Childcare Scheme to allow services to register and thereby participate in the scheme from its inception.

With regard to the development of the ICT system, our work is subject to an independent peer review process under the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer to ensure that it is rigorous, robust and of the highest possible standard. Against a backdrop of detailed preparatory work, at the beginning of the year, I published a Request for Tenders for the development of the scheme's IT system. An evaluation of tenders received has now been completed, a preferred bidder has been notified and the contract negotiation phase is underway. This final contracting phase involves the agreement of a project implementation plan for the IT system which will set out timelines for its development, testing and 'go live'. Once this project implementation plan is agreed as part of the IT contract, I will be in a position to confirm and communicate a planned start date for the Affordable Childcare Scheme.

I am happy to say that good progress is being made too on the administrative, governance and communications areas.

Deputies may also wish to note that 76,000 children are now availing of childcare subsidies under the interim measures introduced in Sept 2017 in advance of the Affordable Childcare scheme itself. The target for these measures at the time had been 70,000 children.

Homeless Persons Supports

52. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the status of the supports being provided to children in homeless accommodation including hubs; the studies that are taking place to evaluate the impact of homelessness on those children; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [24893/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): While the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government has ultimate responsibility for managing homelessness, as the Deputy will be aware, I am committed to helping children and families as part of a whole-of-Government response to the problem of homelessness.

My Department is not currently undertaking any studies on the impact of homelessness. However there can be little doubt that homelessness is an extremely distressing experience, and that any medium to long-term period living in a hotel or other emergency accommodation seriously impacts on normal family life and is particularly detrimental to children.

The Deputy will be familiar with many of the initiatives undertaken by my Department and Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, to support children and families experiencing homelessness. They include the introduction of free childcare for the children of families experiencing homelessness. As part of the scheme a daily meal is provided for each child, the cost of which is included in the subvention rate. The scheme is also designed to help those transitioning from homelessness to permanent accommodation.

Tusla works together with other statutory and voluntary agencies to provide services and supports to children, young people and families experiencing homelessness. Actions taken by Tusla include the provision of funding for child support workers and the appointment of a Homelessness Liaison Officer.

Family Resource Centres, part funded by Tusla, are working with people who are experiencing homelessness and many have developed local responses to the needs of families in emergency accommodation. These include, by way of example, family fun days, homework support, after school programmes, play therapy and transport services.

In recognition of the difficulties associated with homelessness and school attendance, Tusla's Educational Welfare Service offers a number of supports to children (and families) experiencing homelessness.

Tusla's joint protocol with the Dublin Regional Homeless Executive (DRHE) covers child welfare and protection matters for children in emergency accommodation. It is fully operational in the DRHE areas and it is intended to replicate this protocol across the State. A Joint Working Protocol has been signed between Tusla and Galway City Council.

It is important to note that Tusla only intervenes in family life in exceptional circumstances. Children who are with their families in emergency accommodation remain in the care of their parents or guardians. Where Tusla has concerns regarding the welfare and development of any child they will provide family supports to assist that family and child.

Ultimately, my concern is that we minimise and then eliminate the problem of homelessness. In the meantime, I will continue to support measures to help those affected, to the greatest degree possible within my area of responsibility.

Question No. 53 answered with Question No. 28.

Children in Care

54. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the average length of time of a care order placing children in care; and her views on whether care orders can be too long in duration. [25609/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Under the Child Care Act 1991, where it appears to Tusla that a child is in need of care or protection that they may not otherwise receive, Tusla may apply to the Courts for a care order. The care order, including the length of time the order is to be in effect, is a decision for the Courts.

Tusla does not publish data on the duration of individual care orders, and it is worth noting that, in certain circumstances, multiple care orders may have been made in relation to a single child. Tusla does collate and publishes data on the length of time children are in care. This annual figures for 2012 to 2016 are provided in the following table.

Table: Children in care by length of time in care

Year	less than 1 year on	1 to 5 years on	More than 5 years on	TOTAL	% of Total less than 1 year	% of Total 1 to 5 years	% of Total More than 5 years
2012	1151	2842	2339	6332	18%	45%	37%

Year	less than 1 year on	1 to 5 years on	More than 5 years on	TOTAL	% of Total less than 1 year	% of Total 1 to 5 years	% of Total More than 5 years
2013	1197	2798	2474	6469	19%	43%	38%
2014	934	3078	2442	6454	15%	48%	39%
2015	929	2715	2740	6384	15%	43%	43%
2016*	704	2716	2847	6267	11%	43%	45%

*Pre-publication data provided by Tusla, subject to change

For children who are received into care for longer periods or until they are 18 years old, there will be clear reasons why this provides the stability and security for the child and that it is in their best interests.

In recent years, about 40% of admissions during the year are the result of a court order. The remaining cases are received under voluntary care agreements, which are preferred where it is likely that the period in care is to be short. It is also beneficial where there is a good relationship between parents and social workers. For example a voluntary care agreement may be used where a parent is not able to care for their child while participating in a treatment programme or is in hospital for an extended period.

The time periods available for the consideration of the Courts are set out under each care order in sections 13 (Emergency care order), 17 (Interim care order) and 18 (care order) of the Child Care Act 1991, as amended. Where it is in the child's best interests, the Court may make an order for a shorter period than the maximum provided for in the Act.

To make a care order under section 18 of the Act, the Court must be satisfied that the child has been assaulted, ill treated, neglected or sexually abused; or that their development, health or welfare is or is likely to avoidably impaired if the order is not made. The Courts may, for example, consider that the evidence of abuse is such that it is entirely inappropriate that the child would ever be returned to their parents. Another example is, sadly, where a child comes into care because they have been orphaned.

One of the key principles of best practice in child protection and welfare is that children should only be received into care as a last resort, where other means of protecting them have been exhausted. The child's written care plan would address the possibility of reunification with their family, where appropriate. The priority in all cases should be the best interests of the child, and consideration of the child's express wishes where it is possible to do so.

It is important to recall that the Courts can review a care orders at any point, and can then make a determination made as to whether the continuation of the order is in the child's best interests.

A court decision is not required in order for a child to be reunited with family, if it is deemed to be appropriate. In some circumstances, a decision may be made by social workers that in their professional opinion, it is in the best interests of the child to remain in the care of Tusla in line with the Court's decision.

School Completion Programme

55. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the status of

progress in implementing the findings of the ESRI report on the school completion programme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25649/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I am very conscious that the School Completion Programme delivers a valuable service for some of our most vulnerable young people. I am also conscious of the recommendations made in a number of reports, including the ESRI Report, in relation to the governance of the Programme.

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 Farnleigh 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 Farnleigh 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.

Question No. 56 answered with Question No. 51.

Domestic Violence Refuges Provision

57. **Deputy Kathleen Funchion** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if the funding for a centre (details supplied) is to increase due to the significant increase in demand for the service and in view of the fact that the funding for the counselling service was cut in the past. [24824/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): 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.

In 2018, Tusla is providing €23.8 million in funding to domestic, sexual and gender-based violence services, an increase of €1.7m over 2017 funding. This includes funding for some 58 services throughout the country that offer a range of emergency accommodation and community-based supports to individuals and families affected by domestic, sexual and gender-based violence. Many of these supports include counselling.

I was delighted to avail of the opportunity to visit the centre in question, on the invitation of Deputy Funchion, earlier this year. I support and value the work of these services. I understand that Tusla has identified a need for development and expansion of outreach services in the region in question. Tusla has advised me that it has allocated additional funding to the centre in question for the development and expansion of outreach services in the catchment area for this centre.

Tusla has also completed a needs analysis project in the region, which will inform its future plans for service delivery in those areas, as well as the commissioning of services and allocation of funding.

At present, I am not in a position to advise on the level of funding that will be available for services next year. This issue will be clarified in the context of the 2019 Estimates process, and having regard to the overall level of funding available to Tusla next year. However, I can assure the Deputy that domestic, sexual and gender-based violence services are a priority for me.

It is important that the needs of victims and survivors of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence are met in the best way possible, with due attention to the quality, accessibility, and outcome of services.

Question No. 58 answered with Question No. 51.

Live Register Data

59. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Taoiseach the number of persons on the live register at the close of business on 8 June 2018, by county and individual local office; and the number of persons on the register that are classified as seasonal and casual workers entitled to receive jobseeker's allowance and benefit. [25801/18]

Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach (Deputy Joe McHugh): The exact information requested by the Deputy is not available.

The Live Register series gives a monthly breakdown of the number of people claiming Jobseeker's Benefit, Jobseeker's Allowance and other registrants as registered with the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP).

The most recent Live Register figures available are for May 2018.

Table 1 shows the number of persons on Live Register by County and local DEASP office of registration for May 2018. This information is also available online on the CSO Statbank (Series code LRM07). See the following link to CSO website.

<http://www.cso.ie/shorturl.aspx/39>

Table 2 shows the number of casual and part-time workers on the Live Register classified

by social welfare scheme for May 2018.

It should be noted that the Live Register is not a definitive measure of unemployment as it includes part-time workers, and seasonal and casual workers entitled to Jobseeker's Benefit or Allowance.

Table 1 Number of persons on Live Register by County and local DEASP1 office of registration, May 2018

-	May 2018
Carlow County	3,670
Muine Bheag (Bagenalstown)	735
Carlow	2,244
Tullow	691
Cavan County	3,655
Ballyconnell	681
Cavan	2,974
Clare County	5,093
Ennis	2,721
Ennistymon	813
Kilrush	806
Tulla	753
Cork County	19,704
Bandon	663
Bantry	565
Bantry (SWLO)	192
Carrigaline	893
Clonakilty	724
Cobh	569
Cork City (Abbeycourt)	4,220
Cork City (Hanover)	4,223
Fermoy	1,112
Kinsale	562
Macroom	780
Mallow	1,251
Midleton	1,535
Newmarket	728
Skibbereen	754
Youghal	933
Donegal County	11,597
Ballybofey	1,646
Ballyshannon	1,013
Buncrana	2,060
Donegal	725
Dunfanaghy	784
Dungloe	1,160
Killybegs	674

-	May 2018
Letterkenny	3,535
Dublin County	55,132
Balbriggan	2,534
Ballyfermot	2,007
Ballymun	2,377
Bishop Square	4,687
Blanchardstown	4,547
Clondalkin	4,117
Coolock	2,668
Cork Street	4,416
Dun Laoghaire	3,801
Finglas	3,876
Kilbarrack	2,682
Kings Inn Street	2,757
Navan Road	2,963
Nutgrove (Rathfarnham)	2,576
Swords	2,624
Tallaght	6,500
Galway County	11,652
Ballinasloe	1,271
Clifden	701
Galway City	5,826
Gort	840
Loughrea	1,270
Tuam	1,744
Kerry County	7,670
Caherciveen	314
Dingle	391
Kenmare	231
Killarney	1,007
Killorglin	558
Listowel	1,444
Tralee	3,725
Kildare County	9,427
Athy	1,640
Maynooth	3,102
Newbridge	4,685
Kilkenny County	3,558
Kilkenny	2,933
Thomastown	625
Laoighis County	4,591
Portarlington	1,627
Portlaoise	2,338
Rathdowney	626

Questions - Written Answers

-	May 2018
Leitrim County	1,865
Carrick-On-Shannon	1,412
Manorhamilton	453
Limerick County	8,971
Kilmallock	1,023
Limerick City	6,732
Newcastle West	1,216
Longford County	2,845
Longford	2,845
Louth County	8,904
Ardee	961
Drogheda	3,738
Dundalk	4,205
Mayo County	7,481
Achill	261
Ballina	2,122
Ballinrobe	535
Belmullet	517
Castlebar	1,431
Claremorris	766
Swinford	931
Westport	918
Meath County	5,276
Kells	968
Navan	2,648
Trim	1,660
Monaghan County	2,985
Carrickmacross	734
Castleblayney	914
Monaghan	1,337
North Tipperary	4,302
Nenagh	1,666
Roscrea	822
Thurles	1,814
Offaly County	4,522
Birr	1,489
Edenderry	1,212
Tullamore	1,821
Roscommon County	2,377
Boyle	569
Castlerea	1,040
Roscommon	768
Sligo County	3,277
Sligo	2,770

-	May 2018
Tubbercurry	507
South Tipperary	4,735
Cahir	643
Carrick-On-Suir	949
Cashel	629
Clonmel	1,536
Tipperary	978
Waterford County	7,760
Dungarvan	1,126
Waterford City	6,634
Westmeath County	5,701
Athlone	2,275
Castlepollard	645
Mullingar	2,781
Wexford County	10,210
Enniscorthy	2,655
Gorey	2,271
New Ross	1,796
Wexford	3,488
Wicklow County	6,371
Arklow	1,652
Baltinglass	746
Bray	2,698
Wicklow	1,275
State 2	223,502

Source: CSO Live Register.

1 Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection.

2 From January 2018, registrations which have yet not being assigned to a DEASP local office of registration are included in the Live Register totals and therefore the sum of the counties and DEASP local offices of registration may not add to the Live Register totals in this series.

Table 2 Number of casual and part-time workers on the Live Register classified by social welfare scheme, May 2018

	May 2018
Total number of casual and part-time workers on the Live Register	46,917
of which:	
Jobseekers Allowance	35,998
Jobseekers Benefit	10,919

Source: CSO Live Register.

Departmental Strategies

60. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach if he will provide an updated status on his Department's statement of strategy. [25655/18]

The Taoiseach: The Department's new Statement of Strategy published earlier this year reflects the role of the Department to support the Taoiseach and the Government to develop a sustainable economy and a successful society, to pursue Ireland's interests abroad, to implement the Government's Programme, and to build a better future for Ireland and all her citizens. The Department will provide progress reports under the six strategic priorities set out in the Strategy through the normal annual reporting cycle. The Annual Report for 2017 will be finalised over the coming weeks. It will include an update on the broad range of work undertaken by my Department in relation to Brexit negotiations, Northern Ireland, Project Ireland 2040, the Citizens Assembly, reform of the Justice and Health sectors, Seanad and Dáil reform, climate change, pensions reform and housing.

Commemorative Medals

61. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the status of the awarding of a medal (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25791/18]

Taoiseach and Minister for Defence (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I can confirm that my Department has previously examined this case and decided to posthumously award an appropriate medal.

Given the significance of the posthumous award of a medal, the question arises as to whom the medal should be given. The normal procedure is that the medal is given to the next of kin of the deceased person.

My Department has been in correspondence regarding the matter of the next of kin for some time and has outlined the position and what is required. In the past week, some material, which requires consideration, has been submitted to the Department. Once this has been examined, my Department will make further direct contact with the person seeking the posthumously awarded medal.

Human Rights Cases

62. **Deputy Seán Crowe** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if his attention has been drawn to the fact that the Bahraini Court of Appeal has upheld the five year sentence against a person (details supplied); his views on whether the person was simply peacefully expressing their opinions online and this should not be a crime; if he will speak out against their ongoing detention and the Bahraini authorities' determination to squash the right to freedom of expression and silence peaceful criticism; and if he will discuss the case with his Bahraini counterpart and request the person's immediate release and for all charges against them to be dropped. [25750/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): I am aware of the case referred to by the Deputy, and that the individual in question has had his sentence upheld in a recent ruling by the Bahraini Court of Appeal. Ireland attaches a high priority to safeguarding human rights defenders, such as the person referred to by the Deputy.

I remain very concerned about the deteriorating human rights situation in Bahrain, which I have spoken on in this House several times of late. Statements from the Bahraini Government on its commitment to safeguarding human rights enshrined in the Bahraini Constitution are undermined by ongoing examples of violations of fundamental freedoms, including violations of freedom of opinion and expression. A number of worrying developments suggest an increasingly restrictive approach, targeting those who express disagreement with or criticism of the Government.

Ireland's concerns about human rights issues in Bahrain are regularly conveyed to the Bahraini authorities, including through the Bahraini Embassy in London and through Ireland's (non-resident) Ambassador to Bahrain. In February of this year, officials from my Department met with the Ambassador of Bahrain in Dublin, and raised Ireland's concerns about the human rights situation in Bahrain, including the case referred to by the Deputy.

Officials from my Department also raised ongoing human rights concerns with Bahrain in the context of its Universal Periodic Review, which took place in Geneva in May 2017. At the Human Rights Council in Geneva in March of this year, Ireland supported an EU statement under Item 4 (Human Rights situations that require the Council's attention) which reiterated calls on Bahrain "to maintain its commitments as to the respect of freedom of speech and human rights defenders." We also made reference to Bahrain in our national Item 4 statement highlighting our grave concerns over the ending of the defacto moratorium on use of the death penalty.

My Department will continue to monitor the human rights situation in Bahrain, and will utilise every appropriate opportunity to raise Ireland's concerns with the Bahraini authorities.

Brexit Issues

63. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will report on the contingency plans prepared by his Department in the event of a hard Brexit.; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25763/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): Co-ordination of the whole-of-Government response to Brexit is being taken forward through the cross-Departmental coordination structures chaired by my Department. Contingency planning for a no-deal or worst-case outcome, bringing together the detailed work being undertaken by individual Ministers and their Departments on issues within their policy remit, is now well advanced. Its focus is on the immediate regulatory and operational challenges which would result from such an outcome. It assumes a trading relationship based on the default WTO rules, but also examines the possible effects on many other areas of concern. This work is therefore providing baseline scenarios for the impact of Brexit across all sectors, which can then be adapted as appropriate in light of developments in the EU-UK negotiations, including in regard to transition arrangements and the future relationship. It also takes account of the planning being undertaken at EU level by the new Commission Preparedness Unit, which is issuing information notes aimed at different business sectors.

The Government is already acting in order to get Ireland Brexit ready. Dedicated measures were announced in Budget 2018, including a new €300m Brexit Loan Scheme for Business and a €25m Brexit Response Loan Scheme for the agri-food sector as well as additional supports for capital investment in the food industry and Bord Bia marketing and promotion activities, amounting to over €50m in total. Additional capital expenditure allocation of €4.3bn over four years will also allow the State and its agencies to properly plan major infrastructure projects

while ensuring that communities and businesses can plan ahead. There was also increased funding provided to my Department for the opening of six new diplomatic missions as part of Global Footprint 2025, which will contribute to helping our exporters find new markets.

Our Government's enterprise agencies continue to work with companies, helping them to deal with Brexit – making them more competitive, diversifying market exposure, and up-skilling teams. The Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation published last November *'Building Stronger Business: Responding to Brexit by competing, innovating and training'*. In total 34 reports analyzing the effects of Brexit across a broad range of sectors and in some cases setting out responses have been published to date by Government Departments. All these reports are available on a dedicated Brexit webpage on my Department's website: <https://www.dfa.ie/brexit/>.

Longer-term economic strategies will also be critically important in addressing the challenges of Brexit, notably Ireland 2040 –the National Development Plan. The Enterprise Strategy 2025 Renewed was recently launched and we are in active discussions with the European Investment Bank on a potential increase in investment in the country.

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

Departmental Data

64. **Deputy Noel Rock** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the number of Irish citizens that travel to cities not directly served by airports here; and the number of Irish citizens travelling to the ten most popular cities not served directly by Irish airports. [25787/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Department of Foreign Affairs provides travel advice for around 200 countries on its website at www.dfa.ie/travel/travel-advice and also through our free-to-download SmartPhone App TravelWise and via our social media presence. The information provided is continuously reviewed and updated to ensure that it is as accurate and relevant as possible. The travel advice is developed based on assessments and reports from our Embassy and Consulate network, and material available from host countries and local authorities and agencies. My Department also liaises with other countries including EU Member States and other relevant third country sources, with the objective of ensuring that Irish citizens are able to make informed decisions regarding their travel plans. My Department does not collect data on the destinations visited by Irish citizens travelling abroad from airports in Ireland.

I encourage all citizens, when planning to travel abroad, to pay close attention to updates to my Department's travel advice on our website and the TravelWise app, check their passports are in date and arrange comprehensive travel insurance before they depart.

Cross-Border Co-operation

65. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he has had contact with the British Foreign Secretary following the comments by him in relation to the importance of cross-Border trade and the interdependence of business and commerce North and South; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25875/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): North South cooperation and cross-border trade has grown significantly in the years since the Good Friday Agreement, strengthening a growing prosperity which both supports and is supported by the peace process. Underpinned by the current shared EU regulatory framework, cross-border trade at present represents the first export market for 73% of Northern Ireland's small and medium-sized companies. More than 7,000 businesses trade from Northern Ireland across the island of Ireland, supporting over 165,000 jobs. Recent research has also shown a high degree of integration of the economies North and South, including in supply chains and trade in intermediary products. Northern Ireland accounts for between ten and twelve percent of total exports from Ireland to the UK and seven to eight percent of imports. Given that the population of Northern Ireland is less than three percent of the UK total, this shows the closeness of the economic ties between both parts of the island.

This underlines the importance of securing an outcome in the Brexit negotiations that maintains an invisible border on the island of Ireland. This objective goes beyond trade and is to protect the Good Friday agreement in all its parts and the gains of the peace process. Peace and prosperity are mutually reinforcing and cross-border trade is an important element in supporting jobs and building prosperity.

I regularly meet the Foreign Secretary, including at meetings of Foreign Ministers in an EU context, and internationally, as well as other UK Ministers who are heavily engaged in the Brexit negotiation process. Ireland's views on the importance of a workable resolution to the issues relating to the border on the island of Ireland are known to the UK Government and are discussed on a regular basis when Irish and UK Ministers meet. Ireland and the United Kingdom share many areas of mutual interest and concern and we will continue to work on areas of commonality with the aim of reaching an outcomes that reflects Ireland's well-stated objective of achieving as close as possible a relationship between the EU and the UK after Brexit.

Brexit Negotiations

66. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade his views on the recent proposals put forward by Britain to the European Commission in relation to the proposed backstop following Brexit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25877/18]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The fact of the UK's presentation last week of a paper on a temporary customs arrangement, which it sees as relevant to aspects of the island of Ireland backstop, was a welcome, though incomplete, step forward. After its publication last week, Michel Barnier while also welcoming this step, raised questions and concerns about the proposal. The absence of anything on regulatory alignment is clearly a major gap – though the UK has acknowledged that this aspect needs to be negotiated – as is the suggestion that the arrangement should be time-limited, though it is welcome that the date of end-2021 is aspirational. The Commission, in its further analysis of the paper, has identified numerous issues related to the proposal's legal and technical viability, and to its compatibility with the integrity of the Single Market and the Customs Union. It is the Commission which is the Union's negotiator with the British Government on these issues.

The Government's focus remains on the outcome we need to see, of which a key element is ensuring the protection of the Good Friday Agreement and the gains of the peace process, including avoiding a hard border on the island of Ireland. It is welcome that the UK's commitment to this is reaffirmed in its proposal, and that the commitments and guarantees provided by the UK in the joint progress report of December 2017 and repeated by Prime Minister May in

her letter to President Tusk in March have been reiterated.

While our preference is still for an overall EU-UK relationship which would resolve all issues, it remains essential that a backstop is agreed which provides certainty that in any circumstances, and no matter what the outcome of the negotiations on the EU-UK future relationship, a hard border will be avoided. We must have certainty in all scenarios on the commitments made on Ireland and Northern Ireland. This certainty requires agreement on the Protocol to the Withdrawal Agreement.

I therefore very much hope that there will now be intense engagement between the British Government and the Commission over the next two weeks before the European Council on 28/29 June. As we have repeatedly stated, substantial progress is required by then.

Tax Code

67. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance his plans to extend the sugar tax; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25775/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I have no plans to extend the sugar sweetened drinks tax at this time.

The recently introduced tax on sugar-sweetened drinks commenced on 1 May 2018 and applies to water and juice based drinks with a sugar content of 5 grams per 100 millilitres or above.

The European Commission found that the introduction of the tax constituted no aid and further to that decision, a legislative amendment will be brought forward in this year's Finance Bill to impose a calcium threshold on certain exempted categories to ensure the comparability of exempted products to dairy.

Tax Code

68. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the amount of revenue which would have been raised had an exit tax at a rate of 1%, 2%, 3%, 4% and 5% existed as outlined by Article 5 in the EU Anti-Tax Avoidance Directive in each year since 2010 based on the market value of assets transferred from Ireland; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25776/18]

69. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the value of intellectual property and non-intellectual property onshored here which would be subject to an exit tax as outlined by Article 5 in the EU Anti-Tax Avoidance Directive if these assets were transferred offshore in the future; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25777/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 68 and 69 together.

Following the publication of the OECD BEPS reports in October 2015, a decision was taken at EU level to introduce the Anti-Tax Avoidance Directive (ATAD) as part of a package of measures aimed at ensuring a common and co-ordinated approach to the introduction of the BEPS anti-avoidance measures across the EU Member States.

The first ATAD, presented in January 2016 and agreed by all Member States in July 2016, provided for five separate anti-avoidance measures, one of which is an exit tax, to be transposed

on an agreed schedule between 2018 and 2023. Member States must introduce the ATAD exit tax, or bring existing exit taxes into alignment with the ATAD exit tax where relevant, no later than 1 January 2020.

The objective of the ATAD exit tax is to impose a charge to tax when a company migrates out of a State while holding assets, or makes certain transfers of assets out of a State, in circumstances where those assets have increased in value and therefore hold an unrealised capital gain.

The potential yields of an exit tax from 2010 to date at the Deputy's proposed rates ranging from 1% to 5% cannot be determined with certainty as such a calculation would require information on the unrealised gains, if any, latent within the value of assets transferred. Similarly, any potential future exit tax yield from assets on-shored in recent years would depend on the increase in value of these assets, if any, before any future transfer offshore.

However I would note that in many cases, intangible assets such as licence rights and patents in the pharmaceutical and high-tech sectors have a finite life-span and depreciate over their useful lives – for example over the period for which a drug is protected by a patent or the period until an IT sector IP asset is superseded by technological advancements. Depreciating assets of this nature are unlikely to give rise to an exit tax on migration.

Tax Reliefs Application

70. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Finance his plans regarding the continuation of the income tax relief on the back to work enterprise allowance; the number that have benefited from the scheme in the past three years; the number that are on the scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25780/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I should advise Deputy that my colleague the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Welfare has policy responsibility for the Back to Work Enterprise Allowance including the numbers benefitting from the overall scheme. I assume that the particular tax relief that the Deputy is referring to is the Start Your Own Business Relief (SYOB), which provides a 2-year exemption from income tax (up to a maximum of €40,000 per year) for people who have been unemployed for at least 12 months before starting their own business.

In accordance with my Department's tax expenditure guidelines measures such as SYOB are generally reviewed every three years. S. 472AA of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997 (SYOB) contains a sunset clause which comes into effect at the end of this year and my Department is currently reviewing the scheme in accordance with criteria set out in the guidelines:

- 1. Is the tax expenditure still relevant?
- 2. How much did the tax expenditure cost?
- 3. What was the impact of the tax expenditure?
- 4. Was it efficient?

I am informed by Revenue that in 2013 (the first year of operation of the scheme) 228, in 2014 2,291 and in 2015 (the latest year for which data are available) 3,910 persons availed of SYOB.

Further information can be located on the cost of tax expenditure (credits, allowances and reliefs), link <https://www.revenue.ie/en/corporate/documents/statistics/tax-expenditures/costs->

tax-expenditures.pdf .

Government Bonds

71. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Finance the value to date of Government bonds bought by the ECB. [25793/18]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I have been advised by colleagues in the Central Bank of Ireland that as at 31 May 2018, the cumulative monthly net purchases of Irish Government bonds by the Eurosystem (ECB and Central Bank of Ireland) as part of the Public Sector Purchase Programme (PSPP) stood at €27,614 million.

This book value is referenced on the ECB website, where there is a table with a breakdown of debt securities under the PSPP under the section on Monetary Policy, subsection Asset purchase programmes. This page is accessible by use of the following link:

<http://www.ecb.europa.eu/mopo/implement/omt/html/index.en.html#pspp>

Insurance Industry

72. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Finance the process in place to ensure that all of a company's (details supplied) claims are settled in full; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25827/18]

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 and my officials are working with the Bills Office to ensure the Bill is published without delay. 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.

Schools Facilities

73. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if matters raised in correspondence in relation to disconnecting energy supplies whilst schools are closed in the summer months will be responded to; if he will liaise with SSE and the OGP in order to re-establish this cost saving initiative; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25754/18]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Procurement is a key element of the Government's Reform agenda. The Office of Government Procurement (OGP) was established to drive the reform agenda, adopt a strategic approach to public procurement, leverage the State's spending power and deliver savings for the State.

Framework agreements are one of a number of ways in which the OGP engages with the market to achieve value for money in the delivery of much-needed public goods and services. Framework agreements are established through competitive procurement processes and are agreements with suppliers or service providers which set out terms and conditions under which specific contracts can be made during the term of the agreement.

There is ongoing engagement between the OGP and our public sector clients so that the necessary contracts and frameworks are put in place to meet their requirements.

The OGP has established a Multi-Supplier Framework Agreement for the supply of Natural Gas to Public Service Bodies in Ireland. This Framework Agreement was put in place following consultations with representatives from the Education, Central Government, Local Authority, Health and the Security Services Sectors.

The OGP is currently working on the next generation Framework Agreement for the supply of Natural Gas to Public Service Bodies in Ireland. In this regard, it has sought input from the Sectors. Any proposals, including cost saving initiatives, that are put forward and that are feasible will be taken into consideration.

While the OGP is facilitating the procurement process, it should be noted that the management of schools is a matter for my colleague, the Minister for Education and Skills.

Garda Stations

74. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the status of the provision of a new Garda station in Newcastle West, County Limerick; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25815/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran): The refurbishment and upgrade of Newcastle West Garda Station is included in the Capital Investment Plan 2016-2021 for An Garda Síochána. The Office of Public Works has carried out a feasibility study on the redevelopment of the Station based on a brief of requirements received from An Garda Síochána. The Office of Public Works is engaging with An Garda Síochána to progress further all issues associated with the progression of this major

refurbishment project.

Apprenticeship Programmes

75. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Question No. 97 of 31 May 2018, the latest publication or forecast conducted by the skills and labour market and research unit and its apprenticeship services unit for annual targets for both craft and consortia led apprenticeships in each of the years to 2020 and over the next five years. [25926/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan): I am informed by SOLAS that due to a break in the Central Statistics Office (CSO) data series and issues with the ESRI macro-economic model there has been a delay in updating of skills forecasts by the Skills and Labour Market and Research Unit (SLMRU). As soon as these issues are resolved I understand that the SLMRU will commence the occupational skills forecasting project, with subsequent publication.

I have set out in the table the last forecast carried out in October 2016 for craft apprenticeships, the SLMRU has, to date, not conducted forecasts for consortia led apprenticeships.

Trades	Forecast Registrations 2017	Forecast Registrations 2018	Forecast Registrations 2019	Forecast Registrations 2020
BRICKLAYING	60	95	140	180
CARPENTRY & JOINERY	443	700	810	1045
CABINET MAKING				
FLOOR & WALL TILING	0			
PAINTING & DECORATING	44	65	90	110
PIPEFITTING	25	55	65	75
PLASTERING	34	60	90	120
PLUMBING	532	625	690	750
STONECUTTING	8	14	14	14
Wood Machining				
WOOD MANUFACTURING & FINISHING	59	110	125	140
Total	1180	1724	2024	2434
ELECTRICAL				
AIRCRAFT MECHANICS	53	40	40	40
ELECTRICAL	1705	1360	1390	1415

Trades	Forecast Registrations 2017	Forecast Registrations 2018	Forecast Registrations 2019	Forecast Registrations 2020
ELECTRICAL INSTRUMENTATION	120	110	120	130
ELECTRONIC SECURITY SYSTEMS	72	45	55	65
INSTRUMENTATION	20	14	14	14
REFRIGERATION & AIR CONDITIONING	106	90	90	90
Total	2076	1659	1709	1754
ENGINEERING				4
M.A.M.F.	183	185	200	225
FARRIERY	6	8	8	8
INDUSTRIAL INSULATION	21	14	14	14
METAL FABRICATION	224	210	225	235
SHEET METALWORKING	53	50	55	60
TOOLMAKING	65	75	75	80
Total	577	542	577	622
MOTOR				
AGRICULTURAL MECHANICS	45	50	50	50
CONSTRUCTION PLANT FITTING	86	80	80	80
HEAVY VEHICLE MECHANICS	143	160	160	160
MOTOR MECHANICS	353	420	420	420
VEHICLE BODY REPAIRS	46	50	55	55
Total	673	760	765	765
Print Media	2	12	12	12
OVERALL TOTAL	4,508	4,697	5,087	5,587

Schools Facilities

76. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if matters raised in correspondence in relation to disconnecting energy supplies while schools are closed in the summer months will be responded to; if he will liaise with SSE and the OGP in order to re-establish this cost saving initiative; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25753/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): There is ongoing engagement between the OGP and its public sector clients so that the necessary contracts and frameworks are put in place to meet their requirements. My Department liaises with the OGP in this context.

The OGP has established a Multi-Supplier Framework Agreement for the supply of Natural Gas to Public Service Bodies in Ireland including schools. This Framework Agreement was put in place following consultations with representatives from the Education, Central Government, Local Authority, Health and the Security Services Sectors.

The OGP is currently working on the next generation Framework Agreement for the supply of Natural Gas to Public Service Bodies in Ireland, again including schools. In this regard, it has sought input from the relevant sectors. Any proposals to the OGP, including cost saving initiatives, that are put forward and that are feasible, such as that in the details supplied by the Deputy, will be taken into consideration.

Special Educational Needs Staff

77. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if there were errors in the publication of the special needs assistant allocations to schools for the 2018-2019 school year; if all 474.97 SNA allocations announced for County Wexford on the NCSE website will be fully funded and each position filled for the 2018/2019 school year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25774/18]

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 in the school.

I have been advised by the NCSE that the total number of SNA posts allocated in Co. Wexford for September 2018 is 475.97 posts. The NCSE have confirmed that one post was omitted from the published list due to error.

The NCSE have also confirmed that in the case of the identified error in the published SNA allocation for a Co. Wexford school, the NCSE notified the school and informed the school of the correct allocation as soon as the error came to their attention. A decision statement with the correct allocation for 2018/19 issued to the school in question. The NCSE notified my Department of the correct allocation for the school in question to ensure full funding provision is made. The NCSE website list will be updated to reflect the correct SNA allocation for the school in question.

It is a matter for each individual school to recruit SNAs to fill the posts allocated by the NCSE to support the students in the school.

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.

Schools Building Projects

78. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the timeframe for the tender process relative to the completion of school bundle 5; if the subcontractors already involved in the building project and due money for their goods and services will be given automatic inclusion at the original price tendered in a future contract; if subcontractors will be paid the outstanding amount due to them to date; if all new procurement or tendering processes will include clauses to protect the payments due to sub-contractors; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25781/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Schools Bundle 5 PPP Project encompasses five school buildings and one further education college across four sites in Bray, Wexford, Carlow and Kells. Following the liquidation of Carillion Construction Ltd, a tender process to identify a replacement contractor for the completion of the buildings is currently at an advanced stage.

The arrangements to put in place a replacement contractor are being managed 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 have indicated that the pathway forward to completion of the schools will become clearer within the next week or so.

While I appreciate the very difficult situation faced by sub-contractors in the situation described by the Deputy, the Department was not party to the contractual arrangements into which they had entered and does not have any authority to intervene.

Special Educational Needs Service Provision

79. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the recommendations of the National Council for Special Education in relation to supporting children with autism that remain outstanding; and the budget allocation necessary to implement these recommendations in full. [25785/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I wish to assure the Deputy that ensuring that children with special educational needs are supported and given the opportunity to reach their full potential is a key priority for this government.

In 2018, almost €1.8 billion will be invested in Special Education. This represents an increase of almost 43% since 2011 and amounts to almost 20% of the Department's overall Budget.

During the worst years of the recession this Government not only protected supports for children with special educational needs but we grew them.

The National Council for Special Education's Policy Advice on Educational Provision for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders was published in July 2016. The report acknowl-

edges that there has been substantial investment in the education of students with autism over the 14 years since the publication of the last major report on autism in 2001. The report sets out 11 recommendations for further improvement and outlines associated actions to give effect to its recommendations.

My Department has convened an Implementation Group with representatives of the NCSE, NEPS, the Inspectorate and external representatives to ensure that the Report's recommendations are fully and appropriately considered and that a timetable for implementation is prepared. The NCSE estimates that implementing the school based recommendations in the report will cost an additional €20m per annum. The work of the Implementation Group is ongoing.

School Staff

80. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will meet with and discuss the issues regarding a group (details supplied) that have requested a meeting; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25786/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Recently published Circular - 40/2018 is available on the Department's website, which 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 almost 4600 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 to 17, 23 or 29 days depending on the size of the school.

Budget 2017 allowed for the commencement of restoration of middle management posts as part of an agreed distributed leadership model and meant lifting the rigidity of the longstanding moratorium on these posts at primary and post-primary levels. This recognises the key role school leadership has in promoting a school environment which is welcoming, inclusive and accountable.

€2.75m was allocated in Budget 2017 to restore middle management positions i.e. the equivalent of approximately 1,300 middle management posts (Assistant Principal I and Assistant Principal II) at both Primary and Post-Primary. (2,600 in total)

The selection and recruitment process is well under way in most of our primary schools and the majority of these new middle management posts will be filled in the current school year, including schools where the Principal is a "Teaching Principal".

Circular 63/2017 was issued by the Department in September 2017 which deals and sets out a leadership and management framework for posts in recognised primary schools.

While the Principal is ultimately responsible to the Board of Management for the management and leadership of the school, the Deputy Principal occupies a position of vital importance within the senior leadership team in each school. The Deputy Principal co-operates with the Principal in the fulfilment of the Principal's role and acts or deputises as the Principal in the Principal's absence.

In relation to the duties assigned to Assistant Principal posts, the Principal following consultation with staff, agree the schedule of duties as best meet the needs of the school. These duties are designed to reduce the workload of the Principal.

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.

Special Educational Needs Expenditure

81. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the allocation for the low incidence proportion of the special needs budget to schools in 2018; the number of posts delivered using this allocation; and the additional services and resources provided from it. [25818/18]

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.

From September 2017, the model of allocating resources teachers to support pupils with low incidence special education, combined with general allocations, was replaced by a new combined model for allocating special education teachers to schools, based on the profiled needs of schools, as set out in DES Circulars 0013 and 0014 2017.

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.

This provision ensures that all mainstream schools are provided with special education teachers to provide additional teaching support to pupils who require such support in their schools.

Scoileanna Gaeltachta

82. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** den an Aire Oideachais agus Scileanna cé mhéad bunscoil Ghaeltachta a léirigh spéis i stádas mar Scoil Ghaeltachta go dtí seo. [25819/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Léirigh 106 bunscoileanna sa Ghaeltacht spéis le bheith rannpháirteach sa Scéim Aitheantais mar Scoil Gaeltachta go dtí seo.

Beidh deis eile ag na scoileanna sna limistéir pleanála teanga Ghaeltachta nár roghnaigh a bheith páirteach sa Scéim Aitheantais Scoileanna Gaeltachta go dtí seo spéis a léiriú sa Scéim arís in 2019.

To ask the Minister for Education and Skills how many primary schools in the Gaeltacht have expressed an interest in the status of Gaeltacht School to date.

106 primary schools in the Gaeltacht have expressed an interest in joining the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme to date.

Schools in Gaeltacht language-planning areas that have not opted to join the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme to date will be given the opportunity to join the Scheme in 2019.

School Accommodation

83. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a decision has been made on whether a school (details supplied) is to move to the premises previously occupied by another school; when a decision is likely to be made on same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25872/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I wish to confirm that the school to which the Deputy refers is due to move from its temporary location into a Department owned permanent school building from September 2018.

Some minor works are required in respect of the permanent building to facilitate the move and these works will be undertaken during the summer months.

School Guidance Counsellors

84. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of posts and the budget allocated to career guidance in the further and vocational education sector in 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25884/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan): Guidance is provided in the Further Education and Training sector through the Adult Education Guidance and Information Service and through the guidance allocations to Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) Colleges.

SOLAS, through the ETBs, funds the provision of an Adult Education Guidance and Information Service that provides a comprehensive, professional quality guidance and information service to the returning adult learner. This service is open to those who;

- are currently on Literacy, BTEI, Community Education and VTOS programmes
- wish to return to learning but do not know what to do or where to start looking
- left school early and wish to continue with their education and training
- are in receipt of social welfare benefits or who are dependent on someone who is in receipt

of social welfare benefits

SOLAS allocated €6.4m to the 16 Education Training Boards in respect of Adult Guidance in 2017. In regard to Adult Guidance posts, the information is being compiled and will be forwarded to the Deputy shortly.

Guidance was also provided to PLC providers via the post primary teacher allocation system for the 2017/2018 school year for the sector as defined in Circular 12/2017. Guidance is a whole school activity where each school collaboratively develops a whole-school school guidance plan as a means of supporting the needs of students. A separate guidance allocation is given by reference to the following table which sets out the basis for calculation by reference to the approved enrolment on in September each year, including PLC students. There are over 30,000 PLC places attracting the guidance allocation.

Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR) reduction to restore Guidance Provision

Category	2012	2016	2017	Total reduction	PTR 19:1 less reduction
Free Education Scheme - Non DEIS		0.3	0.1	0.4	18.6

Access to Higher Education

85. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the budget and posts allocated to access programmes in the higher education sector in 2017. [25885/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The annual core grant allocation by the HEA to each higher education institution includes an access funding element which is based on the number of students from access target groups who are participating in each institution as derived from the return of annual student data by each institution to the HEA. In 2017 a total of €31.2 million was allocated to HEA institutions as part of their block grant allocations on the basis of the calculations using their access metrics. The purpose of this access element in the core grant is to support the equity of access infrastructure of each institution, including the staffing of access programmes and services as well as other relevant supports for students provided by a range of services across each institution including teaching and learning, student services etc. Within the overall framework for reviewing the accountability and performance of higher education, each institution is legally autonomous as regards the internal allocation of the budget for and staffing of academic and non-academic supports and services for students, including the budget and staffing of access programmes and services.

In 2017 funding provided by this Department for access programmes, which include the Programme for Access to Higher Education (PATH) fund, Student Assistance Fund and the Fund for Students with Disabilities was almost €24m.

Through the PATH Fund a total investment of €16.2m will be made over three years to support greater levels of access and participation in higher education. In 2017 a total of €4.4m was allocated for the three strands of PATH.

In 2016/2017 almost €8m was allocated for the Student Assistance Fund (SAF) supporting 16,000 students in higher education. In 2017/2018 SAF was extended to support part-time student's who are lone parents and from other target groups in the National Access Plan by adding

a further €1m to the Fund. A total of €9.1m was allocated through the Student Assistance Fund (SAF) in 2017/2018.

In 2017 €10,022,489 was allocated through the Fund for Students with Disabilities (FSD) supporting the participation of almost 12,000 students with disabilities.

Departmental Meetings

86. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Question No. 80 of 22 March 2018, the status of the proposed engagement with the community and voluntary pillar; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25886/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): As previously advised, in previous years, under the arrangements in place for the Social Partnership process, officials in my Department met on a regular basis with the Community and Voluntary Pillar to discuss educational issues raised by that sector. A series of bilateral meetings took place between Officials in my Department and the Community and Voluntary (C&V) Pillar over a number of years. The last such meeting took place in November 2015.

In recent years engagement with members of the C&V Pillar has taken place either bilaterally or largely through the structures established to implement Better Outcomes Brighter Futures, the National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014-2020.

Following on from the Deputy's recent question regarding this matter, my officials have made contact with the Community and Voluntary pillar and have requested the pillar to submit an agenda of the topics they wish to discuss with my Department. Once this has been received, a date will be arranged for further engagement between the C&V pillar and the relevant officials in order to cover the issues raised.

School Accommodation

87. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Question No. 211 of 22 May 2018, if an official from his Department will be appointed to meet with the principal and chairman of the board of management of a school (details supplied) to discuss the outstanding financial issues including VAT returns and moneys still due to the developer following the school accommodation development in 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25925/18]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The School has written to my Department in relation to the matters to which the Deputy refers and these are under review. My Department will be in contact with the school directly when an outcome to the review is available.

Commencement of Legislation

88. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when all parts of the Children and Family Relationships Act 2015 will be commenced; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25749/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Children and Fam-

ily 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 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 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.

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.

Refugee Resettlement Programme

89. **Deputy Dessie Ellis** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the policy and time-frame for the resettlement of Syrian refugees; if it is policy to house family members together;

and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25806/18]

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 had pledged to accept a total of 4,000 persons into the State. The bulk of these persons were intended to be UNHCR programme refugees from Lebanon and asylum seekers in Greece arriving in Ireland from Greece and Italy under the EU relocation mechanism. However, the latter mechanism did not deliver the numbers envisaged and the Government has chosen to fill the gap by making additional pledges for programme refugees and 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.

Ireland had committed to accept 1,040 refugees by the end of 2017 under the resettlement strand of the programme and currently 820 people have arrived. The remaining individuals are due to arrive in the coming months.

I have pledged to take a further 945 refugees from Lebanon between 2018 (345) and 2019 (600). At the present time it is intended to undertake two selection missions in Lebanon in 2018, one in June and one in September, in order to select the 345 refugees who will be part of the 2018 pledge.

To date 1,022 people have arrived from Greece. This completed Ireland's current relocation programme.

In addition, the Government has taken 41 unaccompanied minors from Calais to date and both IRPP and Tusla are in preliminary discussion with officials in Italy and Greece with a view to accepting up to 60 unaccompanied minors before the end of 2019.

The implementation of the IRPP for resettling Syrian refugees requires a high level of co-ordination among service delivery agencies at both national and local level. Service provision is mainstreamed and all the main statutory service providers are represented on the national Taskforce which oversees delivery of the programme.

As the Deputy will appreciate, a tailored and flexible approach is required to take account of differing family configurations and the availability of housing stock. Given the current difficulties in the housing market it is taking about twelve months to source suitable accommodation that match the needs of refugee families. The Irish Red Cross are also using pledged accommodation from the public to try and meet the needs of single persons as few accommodation options exist within the local authority sector for this cohort. Refugees, once resettled, largely fall under the auspices of the local authority "implementing partner" who provide appropriate services for a period of eighteen months to assist with integration.

Prison Accommodation Standards

90. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of male prisoners accommodated in single cell accommodation in accordance with the recommendation of the Inspector of Prisons and Places of Detention; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25810/18]

91. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he is satisfied that there are adequate prison spaces for male prisoners in the prison system; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25811/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 90 and 91 together.

I am advised by my officials in the Irish Prison Service that figures in relation to cell occupancy levels are collated by the Irish Prison Service Statistics Unit for publication quarterly on its website, *www.irishprisons.ie*. The information can be found in the Information Centre – under Statistics & Information – Census Reports. In accordance with the latest census on the 18th April 2018, there were 2,001 male prisoners accommodated in single cells.

Given the current number of prisoners in custody – 4,006 on 12th June 2018 - the Irish Prison Service is not in a position to provide single cell accommodation to all prisoners. Single cell occupancy across the system would result in a bed capacity of less than 3,000 and would not be possible to achieve without releasing sizeable numbers of prisoners considered to represent a threat to public safety.

It should be borne in mind that in some cases prisoners are housed together for reasons other than lack of capacity. Family members and friends often elect or are assigned a shared cell. Shared cell accommodation can be very beneficial from a management point of view particularly for those who are vulnerable and at risk of self-harm. There will always be a need for certain prisoners to be accommodated together.

I am satisfied that there are adequate spaces for male prisoners in the prison estate, and these spaces are configured appropriately, to deal with all categories of prisoners. The Deputy will appreciate that my officials are concentrating on aligning our prisoner population numbers with the Inspector of Prisons’ recommended bed capacity in so far as this is compatible with public safety and the integrity of the criminal justice system.

Prison Accommodation Provision

92. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of additional spaces to be provided by the upcoming development at Limerick Prison; the number of additional spaces for males provided from 2015 to 2017 and to date in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25812/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I can inform the Deputy that once construction is complete the new prison in Limerick will have a bed capacity of 285 for male prisoners and a bed capacity of 50 for female prisoners. This compares with the current bed capacity of 210 for male prisoners and 28 for female prisoners.

I can further inform the Deputy that in relation to the number of additional spaces for males provided from 2015 to 2017 and to date in 2018 the position is as follows. In the period 2015 to date no additional spaces have been provided in the prison estate with the exception of Cork prison. The new prison in Cork became operational in February 2016 and it has a bed capacity of 295. This compares with a bed capacity of 210 at the former Cork prison.

Prison Building Programme

93. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the estimated

cost of the proposed Limerick Prison development; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25813/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am informed by the Irish Prison Service that a tender competition for a substantial development at Limerick prison is at an advanced stage. The proposed works comprise the construction of a new wing for male prisoners, a new kitchen, laundry and training facility there and a stand-alone unit to house female prisoners.

As tenders for the development are currently under evaluation, I trust that the Deputy will understand that it would be inappropriate of me to disclose any information in relation to the estimated cost of the project at this stage.

I will provide details of the project cost once the procurement process has been completed.

Bail Law

94. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the extent to which new bail laws introduced in 2017 are having the desired effect with particular reference to the number of crimes committed by accused persons while on bail; the way in which the numbers of such crimes compare with the two years previous to the introduction of the new restrictions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25822/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): As the Deputy will be aware, recent changes to the bail laws, including the Criminal Justice Act 2017, have made the bail system far stronger and have made the law as effective as possible in protecting the public against crimes committed by persons on bail. The court has the power to refuse bail where there are reasonable grounds to believe the person is likely to commit a serious offence. In assessing this likelihood, the court must take into account the nature and seriousness of the offence, the accused person's previous offending and may also take into account the danger he or she poses to the public if bail is granted. The Criminal Justice Act 2017 also strengthened Garda powers to deal with breaches of bail providing a power of arrest without warrant, and made provisions to increase the use of curfews and to facilitate the introduction of electronic tagging for those on bail in certain circumstances.

In terms of available statistics, the Deputy will appreciate that given the new bail laws were only introduced in 2017, the full impact of these provisions will not yet be reflected in the official recorded crime statistics. However, in order to be of assistance to the Deputy, I have requested that the Central Statistics Office (CSO), as the national statistics body, provide the Deputy with the most readily available figures in relation to crimes committed by persons when on bail.

Work Permits Eligibility

95. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if a person (details supplied) can apply for an extension to their visa to allow them apply for employment under the general works permits. [25830/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Atypical Working Scheme for non-EEA Crew Members is exclusively for the use of non-EEA crew members to undertake employment on board an Irish registered fishing vessel. As noted on the INIS "Atypi-

cal working scheme: Non-EEA crew in Fishing Fleet” webpage, permission granted under the Atypical Working Scheme for non-EEA Crew Members is granted solely in respect of employment within the fishing industry and it is not transferable to any other employment permit type.

Any application for an employment permit is a matter for the Employment Permit section of the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation. It should be noted that any application for an employment permit must be made from outside the State (except in the case of Stamp 1G holders and nurses who have completed their adaptation), and so the individual in question would need to leave the State before he could apply for an employment permit to work in Ireland.

The Atypical Working Scheme for non-EEA Crew Members cannot be extended to make a different employment permit application, but an application for renewal is permitted. If the individual in question is not in a position to apply for a renewal of their permission under the Atypical Working Scheme for non-EEA Crew Members they can apply for a renewal of their residency permission by writing to Residence 2 Division, INIS, 13-14 Burgh Quay, Dublin 2.

Residency Permits

96. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the residency status in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25833/18]

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 is the subject of a Deportation Order made on 03 March 2017 following the refusal of the asylum claim made by the person concerned and the detailed consideration of their case under Section 3 of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended). That order remains valid.

Representations were received from the person concerned requesting that the Deportation Order be revoked, pursuant to the provisions of Section 3 (11) of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended). Following the consideration of that request, a decision was taken in May 2017 that the Deportation Order should be ‘affirmed’ and this decision was communicated to the person concerned by registered post dated 13 June 2017.

The Deputy might wish to note that the effect of a Deportation Order is that the person named on the Order is legally obliged to leave the State and to remain outside the State thereafter. The enforcement of the Deportation Order in this case is an operational matter for the Garda National Immigration Bureau.

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

Departmental Correspondence

97. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the status of an application by a group (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter.

[25850/18]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): This Department has not received an application for inclusion of programmes in the ILEP from the Gleneagle Group. An application has been received from one of the partner institutions mentioned but it would not be appropriate to discuss the status of the application with a third party. The applicant provider has received correspondence regarding the status of their application.

Work Permits Eligibility

98. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation if a matter (details supplied) regarding work permits will be addressed; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25788/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Ireland's overarching labour market policy is to promote the sourcing of skills and labour needs from within the workforce of Ireland and the European Economic Area. As the economy improves and we approach full employment, labour as well as skills shortages are becoming apparent in some sectors with the consequent potential to constrict growth due to labour shortages.

In recognising the changing economy and labour market plus the challenges faced by enterprises in attracting sufficient labour, officials of my Department are undertaking a review of the economic migration policies underpinning the current employment permits system. The purpose of the review is to ensure that our policies are fully supportive of Ireland's emerging labour market needs.

The review is overseen by an Inter-Departmental Group, chaired by this Department, and included a public and stakeholder consultation as well as an EU and international benchmarking exercise. A report is expected before the end of June with recommendations on a framework for the future operation of the employment permits regime.

The occupations of labourers, mechanics and carpenters are currently included on the ineligible list of employments for employment permit purposes. 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.

To this end, the construction sector must engage with the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, as the relevant lead Department for the sector, in the preparation of a detailed business case setting out the necessary data and evidence to demonstrate that recruitment difficulties are solely due to labour shortages and not to other factors. This business case would then need to be put forward to my Department as part of the ongoing regular reviews of the employment lists.

Details on how to apply for an employment permit, including the criteria required, as well as various checklist documents and a user guide which will assist in the application process are available from the Employment Permits section of my Department's website – www.dbei.gov.ie. This section also includes a comprehensive Frequently Asked Questions document which answers the majority of the most common queries received from applicants regarding employment permits. A helpline for information on the employment permit regime can be contacted on (01) 417 5333 or Locall 1890 201 616 and any e-mail queries can be directed to employmentpermits@dbei.gov.ie

EU Directives

99. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation her views on concerns raised by a person (details supplied) in correspondence with regard to EU Directive COM/2016/0593 final on copyright in the digital Single Market; and if she or her officials have raised these concerns at Council of Ministers level. [25837/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): On 14 September 2016, the EU Commission published a package of copyright reform proposals as part of its Digital Single Market strategy. This included a Directive on copyright in the Digital Single Market (hereinafter the “Copyright Directive”). The intention of the Directive is to craft modern copyright legislation suitable for all European citizens. Among the Directive’s many proposals are provisions aimed at ensuring greater rights for press publishers seeking to protect their content online (Article 11), and intended to address the “value gap”, whereby rightsholders are receiving less remuneration despite the increased usage of their works (Article 13).

Officials of my Department have been thoroughly engaged in negotiations since publication of this proposal and have been successful in achieving a number of amendments to address the concerns of our stakeholders. On 25 May, the Copyright Directive was discussed by Ambassadors at Coreper and the Presidency gained approval for a mandate to commence negotiations with the European Parliament.

Negotiations on the Copyright Directive have been exhaustive and while I appreciate the concerns that have been raised, I fully support the intention of this proposal which is vitally important to both the DSM and the digital economy. Our focus has always been on achieving the best balance for the competing interests of all stakeholders, including digital economy actors, rightsholders, and citizens. To that end, there has been extensive engagement with stakeholders across the various issues in Ireland, Brussels, and with other EU Member States, including at Ministerial level.

My Department will engage positively with the negotiations on the proposal going forward to ensure that Ireland can benefit from its many merits as soon as possible.

Work Permits Eligibility

100. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation if career guidance teachers will be reinstated on the list of occupations eligible for the critical skill employment permit; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25842/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): At my request, my Department is currently conducting a review of economic migration policies underpinning the current employment permits system to ensure that our 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. 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.

Where specific skills prove difficult to source within the State and wider EEA, an employment permit may be sought by an employer to hire a non-EEA national. The employment permits system is managed in part through the operation of the highly skilled and ineligible lists for the purpose of grant of employment permits. At present, ‘Career Guidance Teachers’ are listed on the Ineligible List of Occupations (ICEL) for employment permits.

In order to remove an occupation from the ICEL, organisations in the sector should engage the Department of Education and Skills as the relevant lead Department in preparation of a detailed business case setting out the necessary data to substantiate a case for removal from the ICEL.

National Training Fund

101. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation her views on the 2017 recommendation of the National Competitiveness Council on Ireland's Competitiveness Challenge 2017 that the National Training Fund must have a clear mandate and objectives regarding in-company training; her further views on reorienting the expenditure profile of the fund to provide greater support to effective in-employment training programmes; and if she has had discussions in this regard with the Minister for Education and Skills. [25928/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Given the recent fall in unemployment to 5.8% and the increased rate of technological change which will impact on many people currently employed, I support the National Competitiveness Council's recommendation to reorient the expenditure profile of the National Training Fund (NTF) to provide greater support to effective in-employment training programmes.

My Department is participating on a Steering Committee overseeing a review of the NTF commissioned by the Department of Education and Skills and has drawn attention to the recommendations of the National Competitiveness Council in this context.

Skills Development

102. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation her views on the 2017 recommendation of the National Competitiveness Council on Ireland's Competitiveness Challenge 2017, that the expert group on future skills needs updated the forecasts to identify the high-level ICT skills demand at occupational level in the broad ICT sector and across other sectors of the economy to 2022. [25929/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): I welcome this recommendation from the National Competitiveness Council, in relation to an updated forecast for high level ICT skills in the Irish economy to 2022.

In 2013, the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (EGFSN) published the study "Addressing the Demand for High-Level ICT Skills". This study included a demand forecast for ICT skills over the period 2013-2018. The findings and recommendations of this report were essential inputs into the development of the ICT Skills Action Plan 2014-2018.

This year, the EGFSN is engaged in a refresh of the demand forecast exercise undertaken in 2013 for the period 2017-2022. This analysis will inform and similarly be a key input into the upcoming ICT skills action plan.

Trade Strategy

103. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation her views on the fact that Ireland is the most vulnerable nation in increased global trade conflict and protectionism ranked first out of 42 countries in a new index of globalisation (details supplied).

[25930/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The ‘2018 Globalization Report: Who Benefits Most from Globalization’ which the Deputy refers to in his question was published on the 8th June 2018 by Bertelsmann Stiftung. The report analyses globalisation’s effect on growth across a total of 42 countries. The report found that Ireland is the most globalised economy out of the 42 studied and is highly integrated especially in global capital markets. The average annual per capita income gain from 1990 onwards was €1,261 placing Ireland 4th of the countries studied.

Ireland is an open, highly developed and well-connected economy that is dependent on international trade and investment for sustainable growth. I am well aware of the shifting and evolving global challenges which may affect us in the future. No open economy like ours can be fully shielded against global impacts. However, I am confident that we have the right policies to build resilience where possible and firmly strengthen our competitiveness and innovative capacity, thus ensuring the economy is properly positioned to meet any external challenges.

From a Trade policy perspective, 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. This includes markets that are growing and have scale as well as markets where we are already well established but with potential for further growth. We aim by 2020 to increase indigenous exports by Enterprise Ireland supported companies, including food, to reach €26 billion, achieve 80% of indigenous export growth outside of the UK market and secure 900 new foreign direct investments.

On the 12th of March, Enterprise Ireland announced that it is set to undertake over 200 international and domestic trade events in 2018 to accelerate the number of Enterprise Ireland clients diversifying into new markets, beyond the UK and into the Eurozone and global markets. The number of trade events being undertaken represents a 50% increase on 2017, 70 of these export focused trade events will be led by Government Ministers.

As well as the global efforts supported by our Enterprise Agencies, key to our success has been our commitment to trade liberalisation in order to open new markets for our all trading sectors. The EU suite of Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) with third countries help to open new markets, break down barriers and provide new opportunities for Irish based firms. Brexit has reinforced the importance of accelerating the delivery of EU trade deals with leading economies and regional blocs.

Most recently, the EU–Canada Comprehensive Economic Trade Agreement (CETA) entered into force provisionally from the 21st September 2017. This means that Irish companies may now take advantage of the all important provisions of CETA including the elimination 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.

The EU and Japan reached political agreement last year on an Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) and the EU and Mexico reached political agreement earlier this year on the modernisation of the EU-Mexico Global Agreement. The EU negotiations with the Mercosur countries continue. Last month, EU Trade Ministers approved negotiating directives for free trade agreements with Australia and with New Zealand with the first formal negotiation rounds envisaged to take place in July 2018.

Ireland will continue to support the EU’s ambitious programme of negotiating new Free Trade Agreements giving Irish based firms expanded market access and a predictable trading environment in third countries, including SMEs. To this end, my Department has commis-

sioned a major examination of the economic opportunities and impacts for Ireland arising from EU Free Trade Agreements which will be available later this year.

This week, the Taoiseach launched ‘Global Ireland – Ireland’s Global Footprint to 2025’ which represents the most ambitious renewal and expansion of Ireland’s international presence ever undertaken, seeking to double the scope and impact of Ireland’s global footprint in the period to 2025. Global Ireland 2025 will support Ireland’s efforts to grow and diversify export markets, inward investment and tourism.

National Development Plan Administration

104. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation her views on the fact that for the first time in 21 years the Government has given Ministers and their officials the right to decide on the funding of research projects under the new disruptive technologies innovation fund as part of the National Development Plan 2018-2017. [25931/18]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): In May 2018 the Government agreed in respect of the four funds under the National Development Plan, that is, the Disruptive Technologies Innovation Fund, the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund, the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund and the Climate Action Fund, that each Fund will have an advisory board with civil servants and experts from the relevant sector as members, and final decisions on financial allocations would be approved by the relevant Minister. As part of the corporate governance arrangements under the Disruptive Technologies Innovation Fund, I as Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation, will establish such an advisory board and also a panel of independent international experts to assess applications and to mark and rank these applications based on pre-defined criteria. The advisory board will oversee the full process and will send all eligible proposals to the international panel for scoring and ranking. The international panel’s recommendations will then be brought to me as Minister for a final decision on financial allocations to successful proposals.

Services for People with Disabilities

105. **Deputy Fiona O’Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health the reason for the delay in assessment of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25760/18]

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 Staff Recruitment

106. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health his plans to appoint a mental

health perinatal nurse to Wexford General Hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25739/18]

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

Medicinal Products Availability

107. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Health if he will engage with an organisation,(details supplied), the pharmaceutical industry and relevant stakeholders to ensure new medicines are available to persons with multiple sclerosis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25740/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The HSE has statutory responsibility for medicine pricing and reimbursement decisions, in accordance with the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013. The Act specifies the criteria for decisions on the reimbursement of medicines. As Minister for Health, I do not have any statutory power or function in relation to the reimbursement of medicines.

In line with the 2013 Act, if a company would like a medicine to be reimbursed by the HSE through the community drugs schemes, it must apply to the HSE to have the new medicine added to the Reimbursement List.

As outlined in the 2016 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 applicant), whether to add the medicine to the reimbursement list, agree to reimburse it as a hospital medicine or refuse to reimburse it.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 in place and must also recognise the fundamental pricing/funding issues to be addressed, in the context of finite Exchequer resources.

I have indicated a willingness to meet with MS Ireland and my office is in contact with the organisation to arrange a mutually convenient date.

Treatment Abroad Scheme

108. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons who have availed of the treatment abroad scheme in each of the past four years; the costs of same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25741/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter, I have asked the

HSE to reply to the Deputy directly.

Treatment Abroad Scheme

109. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons that have availed of the treatment abroad scheme for the purposes of sexual reassignment surgery; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25742/18]

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

Assisted Animal Reproduction

110. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Health if his Department has investigated or given policy consideration to the potential for exploitation associated with the provision of surrogacy services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25743/18]

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.

The specific provisions relating to surrogacy are outlined in Part 6 of the General Scheme. These provisions outline the specific conditions under which surrogacy in Ireland will be permitted, including a requirement for all surrogacy agreements to be pre-authorised by the AHR Regulatory Authority. The Scheme also sets out a court-based mechanism through which the parentage of a child born through surrogacy may be transferred from the surrogate (and her husband, if applicable) to the intending parent(s).

Commercial surrogacy raises a number of concerns relating to the welfare and commodification of the children involved as well as the potential risks of coercion and exploitation of financially vulnerable women to act as surrogates. In light of this the General Scheme explicitly prohibits commercial surrogacy being conducted in Ireland.

The aim of the AHR legislation is to promote and ensure the health and safety of parents, others involved in the process (such as donors and surrogates) and, most importantly, the children who will be born as a result of AHR. Consideration of the welfare and best interests of children born through AHR is a key principle underpinning the Scheme.

Medical Card Reviews

111. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Health his plans to grant long-term medical cards to persons suffering from lifelong spinal injuries; if proposals have been received from an organisation (details supplied) in relation to same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25752/18]

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.

Hospital Appointments Status

112. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of a hospital appointment for a person (details supplied) in Galway Regional Hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25755/18]

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

113. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to suspicions in relation to a product (details supplied) used in the treatment of diabetes; if it

has been withdrawn; when pharmacists were informed of its withdrawal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25756/18]

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.

Occupational Therapy Provision

114. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health the waiting times for occupational therapy for children with dyspraxia by county in each of the years 2015 to 2017 and to date in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25764/18]

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.

Respite Care Services Data

115. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health the number of respite beds available in Waterford city and county for young persons between 1 and 18 years of age with intellectual disabilities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25766/18]

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 Data

116. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health his plans to extend the amount of respite care available to older persons and those with intellectual disabilities in the future; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25767/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): The Govern-

ment 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.

Hospital Appointments Administration

117. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health the reason a person (details supplied) is waiting so long for an appointment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25768/18]

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

118. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) in County Clare will receive an appointment for a hip operation at University Hospital Galway; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25773/18]

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

119. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Health if an early date will be set for a knee operation at WRH for a person (details supplied). [25778/18]

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.

Long-Term Illness Scheme Coverage

120. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Health his plans to include chronic obstructive pulmonary disease on the long-term illness card (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25796/18]

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.

Health Services Provision

121. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health if the case of a person (details supplied) in County Wexford will be examined in view of the need for an urgent medical procedure; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25798/18]

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 be-

half, 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.

Vaccination Programme

122. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health the number and type of seizures and suspected adverse reactions to the HPV vaccine reported to the HPRA; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25807/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The information that the Deputy seeks in relation to the number and type of seizures and suspected adverse reactions to the HPV vaccine is not readily available. Therefore, I have asked the Health Products Regulatory Authority (HPRA) to investigate the matter and reply directly to the Deputy.

The HPRA is responsible for monitoring the safety and quality of all medicines including vaccines that are licensed in Ireland and operates a national adverse reaction reporting system, which members of the public and healthcare professionals are encouraged to submit any suspected adverse reactions through this system. All Reports received by the HPRA are routinely transmitted to the European Medicines Agency's adverse reaction database for inclusion in global signal detection and monitoring activities.

HIV-AIDS Programmes

123. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health his views on the HSE promotional campaign for the HPV vaccine which contains captions such as armed for life and protect our future and states that the HPV vaccine protects girls from getting cervical cancer when they are older in view of information (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25808/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Immunisation is regarded as one of the safest and most cost-effective of all health care interventions. It is also one of the most effective ways a parent can protect the health of their child.

Worldwide cervical cancer is the fourth most common cancer in women and HPV immunisation is an important part of our childhood immunisation programmes which protects women from developing cancer later in their lives. Ninety nine percent of cervical cancer is caused by persistent infection of certain high risk types of the Human Papillomavirus, which is acquired during sexual contact.

HPV is the most common infection transmitted by intimate or sexual contact in the world. Approximately 50 to 80% of people who are sexually active contract some form of HPV at least

once in their lifetime. There are over 100 types of HPV. Around 40 types of HPV can infect the genital tract. Some of these are low-risk types which cause genital warts, while others are high-risk types that are associated with the development of various cancers such as cancer of the cervix, vulva, vagina, anus, penis and throat.

Cervical cancer impacts the lives of a large number of women in Ireland every year. It is the second most common cause of death due to cancer in women aged 25 to 39 years. In 2018 more than 90 Irish women will die from cervical cancer. A further 280 women will need intensive treatment, such as surgery, radiotherapy or chemotherapy, to help them overcome invasive cervical cancer. Unfortunately, 4 in 10 of these women will die within 5 years. A further 6,500 women will need hospital treatment to remove precancerous changes in the cervix.

We are all aware of the old saying that prevention is better than cure, and this is especially true of cervical cancer. In September 2010 the HPV vaccination programme was introduced for all girls in first year of second level schools. In 2011 a catch up programme commenced for all girls in second level school and was completed in 2014. Uptake rates for the HPV vaccine peaked at 87% in 2014/15 and have fallen since then.

There are 2 licensed HPV vaccines available in Ireland - Gardasil and Cervarix. Gardasil is the vaccine used by the HSE in the Schools Immunisation Programme. It provides protection against two high-risk HPV types that cause 70% of cervical cancers and pre-cancers, and two HPV types that cause 90% of genital warts. It has been licensed worldwide since 2006 and is used in over 25 European countries, the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

The introduction of HPV immunisation has had a significant impact in many parts of the world. Countries with high vaccine uptake rates have seen the highest impact: In Scotland where 90% of girls have been vaccinated since 2008 there has been a 90% fall in HPV infections in vaccinated girls. Precancerous growths of the cervix have been reduced by more than 50% in countries such as Australia, Sweden and Scotland. Finland recently published the evidence that HPV immunisation protects against invasive HPV-associated cancer.

One of the most important things we can do is to provide accurate and credible information to enable parents to make a fully informed decision concerning HPV vaccination. The HSE National Immunisation Office has developed a comprehensive range of materials for parents, schools and medical practitioners as part of the immunisation programme. The HPV website has been endorsed by the WHO. The HPV Vaccine Information Campaign helps parents access trusted sources of information. This campaign will be supported through social and digital media activity and local and national radio advertisements.

The initial evidence suggests that this campaign is having a positive effect. Provisional figures show uptake rates have increased by 11% this year to 62%. While this increase is very welcome, we must continue to work to get back to where we were before. As recently as the 2014/15 academic year the uptake rate for HPV was 87%.

This Government fully supports the HPV immunisation programme and recognises its benefits. We must continue to focus on increasing uptake rates as the best way of reducing cervical cancer, and I would encourage the parents of all eligible girls to ensure that their daughters receive this important vaccine.

Hospital Waiting Lists Data

124. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Health the average waiting times for cataract surgery in County Limerick; the challenges adding to the waiting time; the solutions being

put forward; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25814/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Reducing waiting time for patients for hospital operations and procedures is a key priority for the Government.

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 places a particular focus on cataract surgery and includes a commitment that the NTPF will provide 5,000 cataract procedures to patients. In addition, the NTPF commits to offer treatment to all clinically suitable patients waiting more than 9 months for a cataract procedure. Under the IPDC Action Plan 2018 sustainable solutions for Cataract treatment in the public hospitals will also be delivered in 2018 with the planned opening of a Cataract theatre in Nenagh Hospital in July.

In relation to the waiting times for cataract surgery in County Limerick, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

Medicinal Products Availability

125. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 198 of 28 March 2018, the status of the process of negotiations for the funding of the drug Translarna; the definition of a timely manner as stated in the response; if consideration will be given to engaging with the drug provider to provide information on the steps the resubmission process would involve for the drug provider; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that the meeting he held with an organisation (details supplied) and the HSE occurred six months ago and that affected families are distressed by the apparent lack of progress being made; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25823/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Health Service Executive has statutory responsibility for decisions on pricing and reimbursement of medicines under the community drug schemes, in accordance with the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013. The 2013 Act does not give the Minister for Health any powers in this regard.

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

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

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

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

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

The HSE has notified the company that it is ready and willing to review any new application, irrespective of the ongoing court proceedings.

Home Care Packages Data

126. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost of legislating to place the provision of home help hours and homecare packages for elderly citizens as per current HSE qualification criteria on a statutory footing; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25824/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): Improving home-care services so that people can continue to live with confidence, dignity and security in their own homes for as long as possible is a key commitment of the Government. To support this, the Department of Health is currently engaged in the development of a new stand-alone statutory scheme for the financing and regulation of home-care. This will introduce clear rules in relation to the services for which individuals are eligible and in relation to service-allocation. It will therefore be an important step in ensuring that the system operates in a consistent and fair manner and will help to improve access to home-care services on an affordable and sustainable basis. The introduction of a system of regulation for home-care will help to ensure public confidence in the services provided.

The development of a new home care scheme is a complex undertaking which will involve significant legislative, operational and financial resources. A significant amount of detailed work remains to be undertaken before final decisions are taken on the form of a home care scheme and the regulation of these services. Work in relation to the cost of the new statutory scheme is ongoing as part of this process.

However, on the basis of current demand and demographic projections, it is likely that increased investment will be required to support the implementation of the new statutory scheme. The HSE home-care services budget for 2018 is €408 million, which it is anticipated will support the delivery of 17.094m hours of home support to 50,500 people. It is expected that there will be a significant increase in demand for home-care over the coming years. Furthermore home-care service-users have increasingly complex care-needs and there are sustained cost-pressures within the sector which are likely to inflate in the coming years.

In relation to the request for an estimated cost I have asked the HSE to correspond directly with the Deputy to advise on the cost of servicing the current wait list for Home Help and Home Care Packages under the rules of the current scheme.

Positive Ageing Strategy

127. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health the status of the implementation of the national positive ageing strategy; the parts of this strategy that have been implemented; the parts which remain to be implemented; and the cost of implementing the remaining parts. [25825/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): The National Positive Ageing Strategy (NPAS) published in 2013 provides a framework for cooperation to address age-related policy and service delivery across Government and society in the years ahead. The strategy is intended to promote older people's health and wellbeing so that older people can continue to contribute to social, economic, cultural, and family life in their own communities

for as long as possible. The strategy highlights that ageing is not just a health issue, but rather requires a whole of Government approach to address a range of social, economic, and environmental factors that affect the health and wellbeing of our ageing citizens.

Many of the objectives included in this Strategy are quite broad and can be viewed as a set of principles to which Government has committed, and which will inform policies that affect older people on an indefinite basis into the future, rather than concrete objectives that can be delivered in the short term.

New arrangements to implement and monitor implementation of NPAS were approved by the Cabinet Committee on Social Policy and Public Service Reform in 2016. The revised approach recommits to the core principles of the strategy, establishes a mechanism to give stakeholder groups effective and ongoing access to bodies and agencies relevant to older people through an annual forum for stakeholders, and monitors the effect of the implementation process through the publication on a regular basis of a Positive Ageing National Indicators Report.

The inaugural stakeholder forum took place in 2017. Stakeholders were asked to identify key priorities to propose to Government to consider for its focus in the coming year. Through this forum, clear channels of communication between the stakeholder representative group and relevant Government Departments to discuss these priorities have been facilitated by the Department of Health. Based on the success of and interest in the forum, plans are currently advancing to hold another stakeholder forum in 2018.

The strategy comprises four national goals, developed to address key aspects of older people's lives. The four goals, and examples of progress to date thereunder, follow.

National Goal 1:

- Remove barriers to participation and provide more opportunities for the continued involvement of people as they age in all aspects of cultural, economic, and social life in their communities according to their needs, preferences, and capacities.

A key objective under this goal is to promote the concept of active citizenship and to encourage people of all ages to become more involved in their communities. Age Friendly, an organisation whose remit it is to help to create an inclusive, equitable society in which older people can live full, active, valued, and healthy lives under the guidance of the National Positive Ageing Strategy, have been very successful to date in this area. Age Friendly is a World Health Organisation inspired movement which embraces the challenges and opportunities of an ageing population. In Ireland each of the 31 local authorities have signed up to the Age Friendly Programme. Older People's Councils have been set up and are running throughout Ireland as part of this programme, as well, ensuring a voice for older people in local government and community concerns. Implementation on this front does not rest with Age Friendly alone; there are many NGOs engaged in making Ireland a better country in which to grow old and they do so with the objectives of the National Positive Ageing Strategy informing their work.

National Goal 2:

- Support people as they age to maintain, improve, or manage their physical and mental health and wellbeing.

The National Positive Ageing Strategy is strongly embedded within the vision and actions set out for Healthy Ireland, the Government-led initiative which aims to create an Irish society where people of all ages can enjoy good physical and mental health, and where wellbeing is supported at every level of society. The Healthy Ireland Framework was launched in 2013 and seeks to provide people and communities with accurate information on how to improve their

health and wellbeing and to make the healthy choices easier choices. Healthy Ireland takes a whole-of-Government and whole-of-society approach to improving health and wellbeing and the quality of people's lives and a number of new structures have been put in place to ensure that all sectors of society are given opportunities to participate.

Commitments within Government that further the strategy in relation to health and wellbeing include the development of a statutory scheme for homecare, which will aim to improve access to the homecare services that people need in an affordable and sustainable way, thus enabling people to continue to live in their own homes for as long as possible.

National Goal 3:

- Enable people to age with confidence, security, and dignity in their own homes and communities for as long as possible.

Across communities many initiatives, strategies, and schemes are in place that firmly support this goal. One such is An Garda Síochána Older People Strategy, which aims to ensure the policing needs of older people in Ireland are met to the highest standards. This supports the objective of empowering people to live free from fear in their homes and communities, as they age. With regards to facilitating older people to live in homes which are suitable to their physical and social needs, the Department of Housing, Planning, and Local Government and the Department of Health are consulting, through a Joint Committee on Housing and Health, on a framework for supported housing, to facilitate people to age well and healthily in place.

National Goal 4:

- Support and use research about people as they age to better inform policy responses to population ageing in Ireland.

As part of the strategy implementation process, a Healthy and Positive Ageing Initiative (HaPAI) has been established in collaboration with the HSE's Health and Wellbeing Programme and the Atlantic Philanthropies to measure the impact of the strategy and establish an on-going system for measuring and reporting on Positive Ageing. The Initiative monitors changes in older people's health and wellbeing linked to the goals and objectives of the National Positive Ageing Strategy. This is done primarily through the development of Positive Ageing indicators which are published every two years. The initiative is intended to provide evidence of the factors contributing to positive ageing, including at local level and ultimately inform policy responses to population ageing in Ireland. The first Positive Ageing National Indicators Report was published in November 2016 and highlights many of the positive and negative aspects of growing old in Ireland. The second Positive Ageing National Indicators report is due to be published later this year.

With regards to the cost of implementing the strategy, the HSE provide funding to many organisations that work with older people and further the objectives of the strategy. This funding is ongoing by its nature, as the strategy and the goals therein are intended as direction for future engagement for the continued promotion of older people's health and wellbeing.

Autism Support Services

128. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Health if an application by a person (details supplied) for an autism assistance dog will be investigated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25831/18]

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.

Departmental Programmes

129. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health the budgetary outlay provided to fund a programme (details supplied) in Walkinstown, County Dublin; and the estimated amount that would be required to roll out the programme to each county. [25832/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): The WALK Peer Programme operated by WALK, Walkinstown, falls under the remit of the Department for Employment Affairs and Social Protection. I understand that WALK has successfully applied for funding under that Department's Ability Programme and has now secured funding for the next three years.

Home Care Packages Data

130. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health the number of home help hours and home care packages provided to elderly persons; the number of recipients that received the packages; the average price per person for provision of the packages; and the average number of hours provided to these recipients in the past five years in tabular form. [25836/18]

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 Administration

131. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the case of a person (details supplied) who has been waiting a significant amount of time to have their medical card application processed; the reason for the delay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25838/18]

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

Medical Card Reviews

132. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Health the reason a person (details supplied) was not informed that their medical card was being reviewed prior to the date of

expiry of the card; the further reason that they were not informed that their medical card was revoked following the review; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25839/18]

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

Medical Card Reviews

133. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Health the review process for medical card holders whose cards have not expired; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25840/18]

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

Primary Care Centres

134. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Health the progress made to date to replace Clifden Hospital and St. Anne's Nursing Home, both owned by the HSE, with a purpose-built facility; when the new facility will be built and opened; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25847/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): The Department has requested the Health Service Executive to provide the Deputy directly with the information requested on the District Hospital and St Anne's Community Nursing Unit in Clifden, County Galway.

Primary Care Centres Provision

135. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Health when a new primary care centre will be provided in Clifden, County Galway; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25848/18]

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.

Health Services Provision

136. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health if a matter (details supplied) regarding cardiac care in County Kerry will be addressed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25871/18]

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.

Pre-Hospital Emergency Care Council

137. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 919 of 16 January 2018, if there is a review by PHECC to resolve the ongoing problems with non-recognised institutions or instructors of first aid training as a result of its prohibition on advertising by unrecognised and smaller providers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25878/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Pre-Hospital Emergency Care Council (PHECC) is the statutory body responsible for standards, education and training in the area of pre-hospital emergency care. In 2014, PHECC developed the First Aid Response (FAR) education and training standard, building on its foundational Cardiac First Response course.

The Health and Safety Authority (HSA) is responsible for the enforcement of Occupational First Aid (OFA) provisions of Part 7 of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (General Application) Regulations 2007. I understand that since September last, FAR is now recognised by the HSA as the recognised standard to meet occupational first aid needs in the workplace. Both the HSA and PHECC issued joint communications to inform OFA providers and instructors, recognised institutions, students and employers of the key activities and milestones over the course of the transition from OFA to FAR.

Training institutions/individuals who wish to conduct courses and award PHECC qualifications must comply with and meet the PHECC Education and Training standard commensurate with the particular course they wish to conduct, and certificate they seek to award. Therefore, training organisations, including sole traders, who wish to deliver FAR and FAR instructor training are encouraged to become Recognised Institutions (RI) with PHECC. This involves an application process and a commitment to adhere to Council rules for RIs and the Quality Review Framework.

There is no prohibition on any training provider being recognised by PHECC to deliver training, provided that they meet the standard set by Council. In the interest of protecting patients and the public, only approved organisations and individuals are permitted to advertise PHECC approved courses or use the PHECC logo on promotional material.

PHECC provided 5 regional information sessions earlier this year for FAR instructors, OFA instructors, other individuals and organisations interested in its standards and model of course provision. In addition, it has launched online portal to streamline its application process for RI status and course approvals.

I have been assured that PHECC has and will continue to meet organisations and/or individuals to address any issues or concerns that have arisen in relation to the transition from the OFA to the FAR standard.

Medical Records

138. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health his plans to change the law to allow persons timely and free access to their medical records in view of the fact that persons may have to make a request under data protection legislation (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25887/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I am fully supportive of individuals being able to access their own personal medical records routinely and administratively (that is on a

non-statutory basis) from data controllers in health services except where there are exceptional circumstances justifying a restriction of access. Such access should be provided in a timely manner and without any cost to the individual.

Alternatively, individuals may, should they wish, invoke their statutory rights of access under the Data Protection Act 2018 and the Freedom of Information Act 2014.

Under the subject access provisions of the new General Data Protection Regulation and the recently enacted Data Protection Act 2018, data controllers should respond to an individual access request within one month of receipt of the request. In limited circumstances, the response period may be extended to two months, where requests are complex or comprise a number of requests. An individual's access to his or her medical records may be restricted where the data controller believes that access is likely to cause serious harm to the physical or mental health of the data subject. No fee is payable where the request is by an individual to access his/her personal records. However, where a controller believes a request is manifestly unfounded or excessive, they may either charge a fee for administrative costs in dealing with the request or refuse to act on the request. The burden of demonstrating why a request is manifestly unfounded or excessive rests on the health service provider.

Access to one's medical records may also be made under the Freedom of Information Act 2014 if the records are held by a public body within the meaning of the Act. The FOI Act applies to the HSE and to voluntary hospitals as well as to a number of health agencies. It does not apply to private hospitals. It applies to records kept by GPs in relation to patients who are medical card holders but not to the records of private patients. The HSE is considered to hold the records of medical card holders for FOI purposes. Under the FOI Act, an individual's access to his or her medical record can be restricted where the body holding it believes that to give access might be prejudicial to physical or mental health, well-being or emotional condition of the individual. However, where that view is taken the body, access may still be possible through a health professional having expertise in relation to the subject-matter of the record. No fees are applicable where the request involves access to an individual's own personal records. FOI bodies have 20 working days to process such requests.

I would also highlight to the Deputy the Medical Council's Guide to Professional Conduct and Ethics (8th Edition) which states that patients have a right to get copies of their medical records except where this is likely to cause serious harm to their physical or mental health.

I am firmly of the view that patients should have timely access to their personal medical records with no additional cost or administrative burden and will be keeping this matter under review.

Home Help Service Provision

139. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health if a person (details supplied) will be provided with additional home help hours; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25888/18]

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

Home Care Packages Provision

140. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health if additional home care hours will be provided to a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25889/18]

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 Homes Support Scheme Administration

141. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health the reason persons can be approved for the nursing home support scheme or fair deal in private nursing homes and the same applicants cannot be approved for respite care in the same institution (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25890/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly): The Nursing Homes Support Scheme (NHSS) is a system of financial support for those in need of long-term nursing home care. The scheme is provided for by the Nursing Homes Support Scheme Act 2009. Participants contribute to the cost of their care according to their income and assets 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 scheme does not apply to respite or other short-term care. Applicants must be assessed as needing long-term nursing home care to be eligible for State support.

Disease Management

142. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question Nos. 172 and 173 of 17 May 2018, the target elimination date for hepatitis C in view of the contradictory information provided in the response which is 2030 and the statements made by the national hepatitis C treatment programme manager who gives the target date as 2026; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25891/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Hepatitis C virus is a major cause of liver disease worldwide with an estimated 80 million people chronically infected. To tackle this issue, the World Health Assembly adopted the first ‘Global Health Sector Strategy on Viral Hepatitis, 2016-2021’ in 2016. This strategy highlights the critical role of universal health coverage. The strategy’s vision is to eliminate viral hepatitis as a public health problem, encapsulated in the global targets of reducing new viral hepatitis infections by 90% and reducing deaths due to viral hepatitis by 65% by 2030. The WHO European Region adopted the first-ever Action Plan for viral hepatitis in September 2016. The Action Plan follows the 2016 WHO Global Health Sector Strategy on viral hepatitis. It addresses viral hepatitis as a public health threat and aims to achieve these targets in the European Region by 2030.

The HSE’s National Hepatitis C Treatment Programme (NHCTP) was established in 2015, following a key recommendation from my Department’s 2014 Report, ‘A Public Health Plan for the Pharmaceutical Treatment of Hepatitis C’. The Programme is a multi-annual public health plan, which aims to provide treatment across a range of healthcare settings to all persons living with hepatitis C in Ireland. The National Programme’s goal is to make hepatitis C a rare

disease in Ireland by 2026.

Health Services

143. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health if a small amount of ring-fenced funding will be made available to develop a national elimination plan to work in tandem with the NHCTP; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25892/18]

145. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to a report (details supplied); and his views on the recommendations on HCV care enclosed therein. [25894/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 143 and 145 together.

As these PQs relate to service matters concerning the HSE Hepatitis C Programme, they have been referred to the Health Service Executive for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

Disease Management

144. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question Nos. 172 and 173 of 17 May 2018, if funds will be made available to deliver HCV care in primary care settings; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25893/18]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): On foot of a 2014 report by an expert National Group, entitled Public Health Plan for the Pharmaceutical Treatment of Hepatitis C, the Government decided that the HSE should establish a National Treatment Programme. This involved a multi-annual plan for the pharmaceutical treatment of Hepatitis C, based on clinical prioritisation. Patients with the highest risk were prioritised and a phased treatment process delivered over a number of years to ensure that resources were managed efficiently and effectively. An annual sum of €30m has been provided in each year since 2015 to facilitate this treatment programme. At the request of my predecessor as Minister for Health, the HSE established a governance and management structure to oversee the implementation of the multi-annual pharmaceutical treatment plan. This was to ensure that clinical needs were addressed and that there was appropriate national direction and co-ordination such that treatment plans were cost-effective and matched to the level of funding available. The Government remains committed to the objectives of the Public Health Plan for the Pharmaceutical Treatment of Hepatitis C and to the ultimate eradication of hepatitis C in the Irish population. In the light of experience with the programme to date and its success in treating more than 2,000 patients, the HSE is, as the Deputy will be aware, working to develop proposals for integrated care models for hepatitis C treatment, in community and acute settings, and I will consider these, including any resourcing aspects, when I receive them.

Question No. 145 answered with Question No. 143.

Aquaculture Regulation

146. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if salmon farm escapes have been reported from 1 January 2018 to date. [25748/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): My Department's records do not indicate any reports of fish escapes from salmon farms during the period referred to by the Deputy.

Waste Management

147. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the amounts, nature and dates of hazardous material or hazardous waste exported from Haulbowline Island for decontamination; and the destination of same in each of the years 2007 to 2017 and to date in 2018. [25751/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): My Department assumed responsibility for remediation works at Haulbowline Island in 2012. Cork County Council is appointed as my agent for the operational delivery of the remediation project. One of the important initial tasks undertaken since 2012 was to apply for and secure a Waste Licence from the Environmental Protection Agency. The licence in situ was approved in July 2014. The licence sets out the conditions under which remediation activities can take place on Haulbowline East Tip including facility management and operations, emissions limits and handling/treatment of waste.

Cork County Council, as my agent overseeing the operational delivery of the remediation works, has confirmed that there has only been one instance of the removal of hazardous waste from the site for offsite decontamination/disposal since 2012. This involved the removal, in February this year, of 400 litres of waste oil to a licensed facility for treatment. As was appropriate, the EPA was informed in advance of the removal of the hazardous materials.

Greyhound Industry

148. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the injuries sustained by a dog (details supplied) at the Clonmel track on 4 May 2018; and if the dog was euthanised by a vet at the track that day. [25771/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Bord na gCon is a commercial State Body, established under the Greyhound Industry Act, 1958, chiefly to control greyhound racing and to improve and develop the greyhound industry.

Bord na gCon is a body corporate and a separate entity to the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

Bord na gCon has informed me that on the 4th May 2018 the greyhound 'Darty Talk' competed in the seventh race at Clonmel track. The report from the Bord na gCon Stipendiary Steward officiating that night, indicated the dog led for most of the race but collapsed and died approaching the winning line. The vet on duty confirmed a 'heart attack' as the cause of death.

Greyhound Industry

149. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the various methods used to euthanise injured greyhounds at tracks; if greyhounds with treatable injuries are euthanised; and his views on the number of greyhounds injured and killed at tracks (details supplied). [25772/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Bord na gCon is a commercial State Body, established under the Greyhound Industry Act, 1958, chiefly to control greyhound racing and to improve and develop the greyhound industry.

Bord na gCon is a body corporate and a separate legal entity to the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

I have made enquiries with Bord na gCon on your behalf and have been informed that where a greyhound is seriously injured at a racetrack and a decision is made that the animal should be put to sleep, the duty veterinary surgeon euthanises the greyhound by the intravenous administration of a lethal injection.

Greyhounds injured during racing are examined at the track by the veterinarian on duty. Invariably the vet advises the owner/trainer on the treatment options be it with the intention of the dog returning to fitness for racing or in the case of more serious injuries that the greyhound will be kept as a pet by the owner or rehomed through an agency. However, where injuries are of a very serious nature, and in the interest of the long term welfare of the animal, the veterinary surgeon with the owner's permission will decide to euthanise the greyhound.

In the period between July 2014 to the end of December 2017 there were over 336,000 starters at the Bord na gCon controlled tracks in Ireland. As with any sport where speed is a major element, injuries do occur. The numbers injured in this period averaged at 0.45% of starters. Bord na gCon endeavours to minimise the risk of injury to racing greyhounds and is proactive in ensuring that best practice in track maintenance is followed, with inspections by Bord na gCon racing/maintenance and project manager overseeing the work of local track groundsmen.

Departmental Correspondence

150. **Deputy Martin Kenny** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of the case of a person (details supplied); the reason officials in his Department have not responded to correspondence on the matter; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25799/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The matter was inadvertently overlooked and is now being dealt with. A reply will issue this week.

Grant Payments

151. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the grants that have been paid to a person (details supplied) since they commenced farming; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25913/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): My Department has issued a statement of payment history, directly to the herd owner involved, covering the period 2002 to date. A search of Department records is underway to locate any older payment records. The herdowner will be informed of the result of this search in due course.

Young Farmers Scheme

152. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if an

application for the young farmer scheme by a person (details supplied) will be reviewed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25914/18]

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 February 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 17 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 are currently being examined. A final decision on the outcome of the inspection will be notified to the person named shortly. This letter will advise the person named that they can seek a review of the decision by submitting new facts or fresh evidence with supporting documents, within 28 days of the date of the letter.

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.

Young Farmers Scheme

153. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if an application for the young farmer scheme by a person (details supplied) will be reviewed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25915/18]

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 23 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 14 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 28 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.

Agriculture Scheme Data

154. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of applications to the fodder transport scheme by county to date in tabular

from; and the number of eligible applicants that have been paid. [25916/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): A total of 534 applications have been received in respect of the Fodder Transport Support Measure. Processing of these applications is on going with a view to payments issuing at the soonest possible date.

Breakdown of applications received by county -

County	Number of Applications received
Cork	211
Galway	25
Cavan	16
Donegal	52
Clare	51
Kerry	38
Kildare	1
Kilkenny	1
Roscommon	31
Leitrim	18
Limerick	9
Longford	2
Louth	2
Mayo	19
Meath	3
Offaly	4
Sligo	14
Tipperary	34
Waterford	1
Westmeath	2
Total	534

GLAS Data

155. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the estimated average payment for eligible farmers in both GLAS and GLAS+; the number of farmers that are active in the GLAS and GLAS+ scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25917/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The estimated average payment for eligible farmers in the GLAS Scheme is €4,155 which, as provided for under EU Regulation, is paid in two parts. The estimated average payment for eligible farmers in the GLAS + scheme is an additional €1,450. There are currently 49,295 participants live in the GLAS scheme, including 3,329 GLAS + participants.

Bord Bia Staff

156. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Ma-

rine the location and number of full-time and part-time staff employed in each international Bord Bia office; and the cost of offices and staffing by each office on an annual basis in tabular form. [25918/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Bord Bia has 13 international offices: Amsterdam, Dubai, Dusseldorf, London, Madrid, Milan, Moscow, New York, Paris, Shanghai, Singapore, Stockholm and Warsaw.

The number of full time and part time staff employed in each; and the costs of offices and staffing for each international office on an annual basis, is an operational matter for Bord Bia. My Department has asked Bord Bia to contact the Deputy directly.

GLAS Data

157. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of persons in receipt of GLAS 1, 2 and 3 that have received the 85% advance payment of their 2017 payment by county in tabular form; the number of persons that have passed all payment approval checks and are awaiting their 85% portion of 2017 payment; the number of GLAS recipients that have yet to receive this portion of payment by county; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25919/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Balancing Payments for the GLAS scheme commence when the Member State has verified that all eligibility conditions have been met. This is a requirement in the relevant EU Payment Regulations and is a long-standing EU audit requirement. GLAS 2017 balancing payments commenced payment week ending 18 May 2018 as per my Department's commitment at the beginning of the year.

To date, over 98% of eligible GLAS participants have received their balancing payment. A number of cases remain ineligible for payment as the GLAS participant and/or their Advisor need to take action. I would encourage any GLAS applicant with outstanding obligations, such as the submission of a Nutrient Management Plan or finalisation of a Commonage Management Plan to speak to their Advisor and ensure that this work is completed as a priority. Without the submission of all the required information, these applicants will remain ineligible for further GLAS payments.

Please find in the table a further breakdown of GLAS 2017 payments made to date:

-	GLAS 1								
County	Cases	Advance	Advance Amt	Advance+	Advance+ Amt	Balance	Balance Amt	Balance+	Bal- ance+ Amt
Carlow	271	265	€998,321.08	6	€1,947.30	208	€136,784.79	€0.00	€0.00
Cavan	901	891	€3,238,628.30	16	€14,769.54	764	€494,411.87	€0.00	€0.00
Clare	1599	1,574	€5,642,137.18	235	€331,367.12	1,337	€846,086.94	€0.00	€0.00
Cork	2121	2,082	€7,179,992.61	180	€240,821.87	1,663	€1,011,250.85	€0.00	€0.00
Donegal	1919	1,862	€6,175,524.29	120	€147,025.27	1,232	€713,557.85	€0.00	€0.00
Dublin	58	57	€206,476.66	2	€1,718.48	41	€26,059.85	€0.00	€0.00
Galway	3033	2,949	€10,536,128.37	160	€157,147.44	2,281	€1,445,115.27	€0.00	€0.00
Kerry	1758	1,696	€6,002,001.22	276	€341,654.76	1,113	€680,653.29	€0.00	€0.00
Kildare	239	229	€852,314.60	0	€0.00	175	€115,749.27	€0.00	€0.00
Kilkenny	423	414	€1,515,922.75	0	€0.00	361	€234,376.57	€0.00	€0.00
Laois	366	362	€1,302,414.65	18	€24,459.26	303	€193,123.31	€0.00	€0.00
Leitrim	1010	998	€3,588,649.30	38	€48,887.01	855	€539,156.43	€0.00	€0.00
Limerick	1039	1,026	€3,675,077.19	158	€236,000.03	940	€593,692.07	€0.00	€0.00

Questions - Written Answers

Longford	509	505	€1,824,869.10	1	€1,699.99	464	€295,553.70	€0.00	€0.00
Louth	147	135	€494,012.13	0	€0.00	91	€59,484.22	€0.00	€0.00
Mayo	2527	2,389	€8,446,356.43	154	€120,563.01	1,824	€1,134,092.93	€0.00	€0.00
Meath	418	411	€1,480,910.96	0	€0.00	350	€222,432.88	€0.00	€0.00
Monaghan	571	564	€1,859,104.38	7	€7,438.53	463	€268,820.95	€0.00	€0.00
Offaly	472	464	€1,639,856.09	13	€17,320.84	386	€239,802.39	€0.00	€0.00
Roscommon	1513	1,499	€5,455,851.38	5	€3,152.92	1,361	€870,261.01	€0.00	€0.00
Sligo	928	906	€3,185,653.41	17	€21,078.63	754	€472,324.57	€0.00	€0.00
Tipperary	1114	1,087	€3,987,663.00	74	€100,241.55	925	€594,900.74	€0.00	€0.00
Waterford	355	332	€1,174,313.26	25	€29,127.68	256	€155,996.51	€0.00	€0.00
Westmeath	639	633	€2,307,231.94	4	€3,805.89	568	€365,859.74	€0.00	€0.00
Wexford	746	726	€2,727,123.88	7	€6,811.70	621	€409,933.17	€0.00	€0.00
Wicklow	325	314	€1,190,575.79	11	€7,842.52	227	€151,933.25	€0.00	€0.00
TOTAL	25,001	24,370	€86,687,109.95	1,527	€1,864,881.34	19,563	€12,271,414.42	0	€0.00
GLAS Totals									
Cases			49,337						
Paid Adv			47,793						
Paid Bal			32,936						
Amount			€189,161,027.18						
GLAS+ Totals									
Cases			3,329						
Amount			€3,969,166.75						

(Table cntd.)

-	GLAS 2								
County	Cases	Advance	Advance Amt	Advance+	Advance+ Amt	Balance	Balance Amt	Balance+	Balance+ Amt
Carlow	125	118	€421,768.28	0	€0.00	92	€58,578.76	€0.00	€0.00
Cavan	428	418	€1,503,839.13	15	€21,577.15	355	€224,599.13	€0.00	€0.00
Clare	684	670	€2,449,460.44	114	€158,662.21	544	€349,971.01	€0.00	€0.00
Cork	992	954	€3,364,310.19	116	€160,256.74	748	€462,764.77	€0.00	€0.00
Donegal	993	955	€3,099,024.33	120	€147,393.30	522	€300,168.93	€0.00	€0.00
Dublin	17	17	€63,772.73	1	€1,699.99	14	€9,014.30	€0.00	€0.00
Galway	1,285	1,220	€4,186,695.04	94	€101,905.10	849	€522,863.09	€0.00	€0.00
Kerry	864	831	€2,998,477.15	178	€216,378.42	500	€314,448.93	€0.00	€0.00
Kildare	76	64	€226,328.10	0	€0.00	51	€32,197.04	€0.00	€0.00
Kilkenny	207	201	€754,015.49	0	€0.00	174	€115,542.61	€0.00	€0.00
Laois	191	185	€654,579.19	8	€11,056.15	159	€98,135.90	€0.00	€0.00
Leitrim	419	406	€1,474,117.59	39	€51,440.93	330	€211,500.80	€0.00	€0.00
Limerick	296	286	€1,014,037.13	44	€58,869.53	257	€160,845.71	€0.00	€0.00
Longford	341	332	€1,224,651.94	5	€5,745.69	302	€197,366.28	€0.00	€0.00
Louth	78	71	€246,745.65	0	€0.00	40	€25,842.10	€0.00	€0.00
Mayo	1,316	1,216	€4,152,188.15	129	€112,789.47	793	€478,418.55	€0.00	€0.00
Meath	195	192	€687,702.48	0	€0.00	165	€105,334.75	€0.00	€0.00
Monaghan	143	142	€484,904.20	5	€8,499.92	129	€77,502.34	€0.00	€0.00
Offaly	275	262	€995,684.86	17	€25,248.49	229	€152,560.43	€0.00	€0.00
Roscommon	547	526	€1,886,448.33	12	€8,713.93	463	€293,640.37	€0.00	€0.00
Sligo	362	351	€1,204,314.67	18	€21,852.76	262	€156,454.81	€0.00	€0.00
Tipperary	500	478	€1,773,773.93	44	€55,709.40	378	€245,998.67	€0.00	€0.00
Waterford	130	114	€403,956.67	6	€10,199.84	92	€57,928.60	€0.00	€0.00
Westmeath	263	255	€940,014.54	8	€9,325.55	232	€151,057.76	€0.00	€0.00
Wexford	262	244	€911,451.68	7	€7,953.33	218	€143,653.85	€0.00	€0.00
Wicklow	151	145	€565,851.23	16	€13,421.39	75	€50,389.17	€0.00	€0.00
TOTAL	11,140	10,653	€37,688,113.12	996	€1,208,699.29	7,973	€4,996,778.66	0	€0.00
GLAS Totals									
Cases									
Paid Adv									

13 June 2018

Paid Bal									
Amount									
GLAS+ Totals									
Cases									
Amount									

Table cntd.

-	GLAS 3								
County	Cases	Advance	Advance Amt	Advance+	Advance+ Amt	Balance	Balance Amt	Balance+	Balance+ Amt
Carlow	127	125	€456,647.42	5	€4,137.69	41	26081.29	0	0
Cavan	534	521	€1,847,584.45	12	€15,613.16	238	145892.96	0	0
Clare	804	784	€2,779,471.87	69	€85,902.27	342	208485.73	0	0
Cork	930	895	€3,026,868.89	67	€96,175.84	494	286801.5	0	0
Donegal	1,406	1,362	€4,192,533.44	116	€141,935.22	546	287145.36	0	0
Dublin	19	19	€64,567.68	0	€0.00	9	6126.53	0	0
Galway	1,585	1,541	€5,292,703.80	93	€79,533.49	814	490339.64	0	0
Kerry	762	734	€2,537,528.76	113	€126,944.02	343	204850.23	0	0
Kildare	114	107	€399,728.36	4	€4,277.30	57	37402.64	0	0
Kilkenny	191	177	€673,061.32	2	€1,959.03	84	55269.29	0	0
Laois	231	220	€801,395.21	10	€13,037.61	66	43237.62	0	0
Leitrim	525	517	€1,805,624.72	38	€45,074.95	199	120346.39	0	0
Limerick	402	396	€1,397,250.31	28	€35,088.10	271	167532.92	0	0
Longford	328	322	€1,164,276.38	1	€885.32	131	82971.72	0	0
Louth	93	91	€326,537.64	1	€41.33	30	18957.28	0	0
Mayo	1,661	1,578	€5,262,748.22	122	€90,211.43	592	354863.45	0	0
Meath	247	237	€848,537.28	2	€2,821.98	58	36310.21	0	0
Monaghan	334	332	€1,127,288.74	2	€1,792.95	172	99481.42	0	0
Offaly	294	284	€1,054,725.56	18	€20,885.12	79	51853.53	0	0
Roscommon	715	698	€2,493,781.70	15	€17,433.09	249	155137.39	0	0
Sligo	492	479	€1,684,478.79	24	€22,214.86	118	72804.02	0	0
Tipperary	498	485	€1,799,265.61	32	€47,731.49	179	114437.82	0	0
Waterford	120	111	€400,605.07	11	€14,049.78	62	37347.8	0	0
Westmeath	278	272	€1,003,813.28	3	€2,623.91	115	72134.18	0	0
Wexford	307	292	€1,118,059.16	15	€21,568.93	78	51397.35	0	0
Wicklow	199	191	€709,584.82	3	€3,647.25	33	21734.28	0	0
TOTAL	13,196	12,770	€44,268,668.48	806	€895,586.12	5,400	€3,248,942.55	0	€0.00
GLAS Totals									
Cases									
Paid Adv									
Paid Bal									
Amount									

Agriculture Scheme Data

158. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of persons in receipt of the sheep welfare scheme payment who have received their 2017 balancing payment by county in tabular form; the number who have passed all payment approval checks and are awaiting on their 2017 balancing payment; the number in receipt of sheep welfare payments who have yet to receive the 2017 balancing payment by county; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25920/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The position at 11th June is as follows:

Table 1

Questions - Written Answers

County	Number of applicants who have received a balancing payment as of 11th of June 2018
CARLOW	417
CAVAN	419
CLARE	203
CORK	990
DONEGAL	3531
DUBLIN	103
GALWAY	2391
KERRY	1678
KILDARE	358
KILKENNY	295
LAOIS	243
LEITRIM	681
LIMERICK	89
LONGFORD	219
LOUTH	227
MAYO	2997
MEATH	565
MONAGHAN	210
OFFALY	282
ROSCOMMON	1034
SLIGO	880
TIPPERARY	450
WATERFORD	239
WESTMEATH	402
WEXFORD	543
WICKLOW	825
TOTAL	20271

Table 2

County	Number of applicants not yet cleared for payment - issues still outstanding as of 11th June 2018
CARLOW	25
CAVAN	21
CLARE	16
CORK	38
DONEGAL	88
DUBLIN	3
GALWAY	64
KERRY	29
KILDARE	22
KILKENNY	9
LAOIS	17
LEITRIM	7

County	Number of applicants not yet cleared for payment - issues still outstanding as of 11th June 2018
LIMERICK	4
LONGFORD	10
LOUTH	10
MAYO	46
MEATH	14
MONAGHAN	16
OFFALY	16
ROSCOMMON	29
SLIGO	13
TIPPERARY	26
WATERFORD	7
WESTMEATH	13
WEXFORD	55
WICKLOW	52
TOTAL	650

As further cases in table 2 are resolved, pay runs are put in place to process them to payment. Some of these cases might not receive a payment e.g. where the actions have not been completed by the applicant.

GLAS Administration

159. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if the GLAS scheme will be reopened for new participants. [25921/18]

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 participants 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.

Horticulture Sector

160. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of applications to the 2018 scheme of investment aid for the development of the commercial horticulture sector by county to date, in tabular form; and the number of eligible applicants that have been paid. [25923/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The Scheme of Investment Aid for the Development of the Commercial Horticulture Sector continues to be

the main support for the wider horticulture industry. This State funded scheme of investment aid provides for the development of the commercial horticulture sector by providing grant aid at a rate of 40% (50% in the case of young applicants under 35 years of age) on approved costs associated with capital investment in a broad range of specialised horticultural equipment and buildings that contribute to at least one of the scheme's four objectives, namely to: improve the quality of output, facilitate environmentally friendly practices, improve working conditions and promote diversification of production.

The scheme is an effective vehicle for investment in all sectors of the horticulture industry, including field vegetables, mushrooms, protected crops, nursery crops, soft fruit/apples, cut foliage, Christmas trees, bulbs and bee-keeping.

In relation to the 2018 scheme, approvals were issued to 170 applicants, which will facilitate grower investment of approximately €13m. The following is a county by county summary of applications received under the scheme for 2018.

The closing date for receipt of claims for payment is 28th September 2018, therefore most applicants have not yet submitted these and payments are normally made later in the year. However, three applicants have been already paid under the 2018 scheme to date.

County	Number of Applications Received
Carlow	1
Cavan	2
Clare	3
Cork	17
Donegal	1
Dublin	37
Galway	3
Kerry	6
Kildare	10
Kilkenny	4
Laois	1
Limerick	3
Longford	1
Louth	5
Meath	8
Monaghan	8
Offaly	5
Roscommon	2
Tipperary	12
Waterford	6
Westmeath	5
Wexford	25
Wicklow	5
Total	170

Food Exports

161. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Ma-

rine the progress by Irish and European cheese manufacturers in accessing the Canadian market with respect to the 16,000 tonne general cheese quota and the 1,700 tonne industrial cheese quota CETA agreement in view of reports that artificial barriers such as non-tariff measures have been put in place to make it harder for small EU cheese producers to sell their products into this market and avail of the increased quota. [25924/18]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The latest CSO statistics covering the period January to March 2018 indicate an increase of cheese exports from Ireland to Canada, with 57 tonnes being exported at a value of €400,000.

This represents a 50% increase over the same period in 2017.

While this increase is modest it indicates that Irish producers are beginning to access the market.

Canada operates a strict quota system to regulate dairy sector imports and I am aware that the EU's dairy sector has raised concerns over the implementation of cheese tariff-rate-quotas (TRQs) under the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA).

I am monitoring the situation closely and will be engaging with the European Commission and other member states on the matter.

National Broadband Plan Implementation

162. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the timeframe for the commencement of the national broadband plan (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25759/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): The 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 the final stages of the formal procurement process to select a company who will roll-out a new high speed broadband network in the State intervention area.

I welcome the recently published European Court of Auditors report on broadband in EU Member States and acknowledge the comments on Ireland's progress under the National Broadband Plan (NBP). I also note that the referenced report acknowledges Ireland's overall improved performance in broadband coverage. I further welcome the overall positive comments from the ECA regarding Ireland's progress towards achieving the ambition of the EU Digital Agenda for 2020 - "Connectivity for a Gigabit Society". A key element of the NBP is to build a future proofed network which will ultimately support future European connectivity goals, including the EU ambition that, by 2025:

- all schools, transport hubs and main providers of public services as well as digitally intensive enterprises should have access to internet connections with download/upload speeds of 1 Gigabit of data per second;
- all European households, rural or urban, should have access to networks offering a down-

load speed of at least 100 Mbps, which can be upgraded to 1 Gigabit; and

- all urban areas as well as major roads and railways should have uninterrupted 5G wireless broadband coverage.

Recycling Policy

163. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the measures being introduced to reduce the level of plastic and single use plastics; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25800/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): 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. I 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 plastic single use items. I believe that working proactively with our European colleagues will achieve a greater environmental benefit.

Nevertheless, in line with the potential for European bans and restrictions, I am considering what financial incentives or penalties I can introduce, 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 practical solutions along with my government colleagues responsible for marine environment and fisheries that will work in an Irish context.

Smoking Ban

164. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the deadline for the introduction of the ban on the sale of smoky coal nationwide; the means by which he will be introducing the ban; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25869/18]

165. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the steps he will take to prevent the importation by distributors and or consumers of smoky coal from Northern Ireland following the introduction of the nationwide ban on smoky coal. [25870/18]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis

Naughten): I propose to take Questions Nos. 164 and 165 together.

The ban on the marketing, sale and distribution of bituminous coal, or ‘the smoky coal ban’ as it is commonly known, was first introduced in Dublin in 1990, and subsequently extended to our major cities. Following a public consultation process, it was further extended in 2012, and now applies in 26 urban areas nationwide. The ban has proved very effective in reducing particulate matter and sulphur dioxide levels and has had the effect of significantly improving public health. Research indicates, for example, that the ban has resulted in over 350 fewer annual deaths in Dublin alone.

In light of its significant health benefits, I decided to extend the ban to the entire territory of the State. This process necessarily involves discussion and consultation with a wide number of stakeholders, including with the European Commission, relevant Government Departments and Agencies and the residential fuel industry. Discussions with stakeholders on issues that may arise in connection with the proposed nationwide ban are underway with a view to introducing a national ban on a phased basis over twelve months commencing in Autumn 2018.

Local Authorities, including those bordering Northern Ireland, are primarily responsible for the enforcement of legislation on solid fuel including the ‘smoky coal’ regulations within their functional areas at present, and this will continue after the extension of the ban. The powers that Local Authorities have in this area are extensive and will apply nationally. For example:

- Local Authority staff may undertake inspections of premises and vehicles being used for the sale and distribution of solid fuel as well as collect samples

- A Local Authority may bring a prosecution under the Air Pollution Act for breaches of the Regulations

- The maximum fine amounts for breaches of the Regulations is €5,000 on summary conviction

- Fixed payment notices (or ‘on the spot fines’) applied by the Local Authority are in operation for alleged offences relating to the marketing, sale and distribution of prohibited fuels in Low Smoke Zones (LSZs)

In addition to the measures available to Local Authorities outlined above, my officials are currently examining other enforcement options to ensure the success of the ban, including the establishment of multiagency teams. This is in line with other areas of environmental enforcement such as waste, where such an approach has proved successful.

Inland Fisheries Ireland

166. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the timeframe for Inland Fisheries Ireland to ensure salmon a safe passage at a privately owned tailrace and a weir on the River Slaney at a location (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25912/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Seán Kyne) (Deputy Seán Kyne): I am advised by Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) that statutory powers in relation to an installation, such as that referred to by the Deputy, under Section 123 of the Fisheries (Consolidation) Act 1959, relate to the requirements for gratings in watercourses diverted from rivers.

Notwithstanding the fact that the gratings in question meet the legal requirements of Sec-

tion 123 of the 1959 Act, IFI is aware that issues for the free passage of fish remain. IFI is particularly anxious to improve fish passage but many of the issues at this location are beyond the powers and remit of IFI.

IFI has worked and will continue to work with all stakeholders and in this regard I met with IFI and Fishery Owners Group who undertook to discuss matters with the owner of the installation to ascertain what if any accommodation could be agreed.

I understand that discussions are on-going and my Department will continue to engage with relevant parties to ensure a solution can be found.

Driver Licences

167. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if a matter in relation to a valid drivers licence for a person (details supplied) will be investigated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25762/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The operation of the National Driver Licensing Service is the statutory responsibility of the Road Safety Authority. I have therefore referred this 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.

State Airports

168. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if a meeting with the DAA and a group (details supplied) will be convened. [25789/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As the Deputy is aware, the daa has statutory responsibility to manage, operate and develop Dublin Airport, including the North Runway project. The Deputy will also be aware that I have met previously with residents' groups in relation to the second runway at Dublin Airport and ensured that their concerns were brought to the attention of daa. I have always made myself available to meet with such groups.

As I have previously stated, legal proceedings are still ongoing on this matter and it would therefore be inappropriate for me to comment further on issues to which these proceedings relate. I have also given an undertaking to arrange for the provision of any information that is appropriate to release when the litigation is concluded. However, I will, of course, be prepared to consider meeting with the group concerned if they have other issues which they wish to discuss with me.

Rail Network Expansion

169. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if the review of an extension to the western rail corridor has commenced; if so, the person or body carrying out the review; when the conclusions of the review will be published; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25790/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As the Deputy is aware, both the "Programme for a Partnership Government" and the recently-published "Na-

tional Development Plan” commit to independent review of the costings for a proposal to extend the existing Western Rail Corridor.

My Department is currently at an advanced stage in developing an approach for progressing such a review in line with these commitments, and I expect to be in a position shortly to decide on the approach to be taken. I am also cognisant of the need for stakeholder consultation as part of the process, and can assure the Deputy that this will be an integral part of the review’s arrangements. Once the process is complete, the findings of this review will be submitted to Government for consideration in the usual way.

Driver Test Centres

170. **Deputy Fergus O’Dowd** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the cost of running each driving test centre by location; the year each centre was established; the number of staff that operate out of each centre; if the staff are headquartered at the centre or at a different base; if so, the additional cost involved per annum; the bases from which staff have to travel to and from; the person or body that owns each such centre; the cost of purchasing same; the rent or lease cost of same; the length of time each lease or rent agreement has to run; the number of tests carried out at each centre in each of the past three years; the number of tests cancelled; the pass rate for each centre; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25841/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): These are matters for the Road Safety Authority. I have referred the question to the Authority for direct reply. I would ask the Deputy to contact my office if a response is not received within 10 days.

Road Safety Authority Data

171. **Deputy Fergus O’Dowd** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the location of each property owned, leased or rented by the Road Safety Authority; the purpose for which each such property is used; the number of staff working at each location; the annual cost of running, leasing or renting each property; if leased or rented, the length of time each such lease or rental agreement might run; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25846/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): These are matters for the Road Safety Authority. I have referred the question to the Authority for direct reply. I would ask the Deputy to contact my office if a response is not received within 10 days.

Departmental Bodies Data

172. **Deputy Fergus O’Dowd** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the bodies under the aegis of his Department which have yet to publish their annual report for 2017; when same will be published; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25849/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As the Deputy is aware the preparation and publication of the Annual Reports is a matter for the Board of the relevant State Body and is subject to the establishing legislation of the State body in question and other applicable legislative and policy frameworks, including the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies.

A number of my Department’s commercial State bodies have already published their An-

nual Reports and these are available to view on their websites. These bodies are –

- daa
- IAA
- Shannon Group
- CIÉ
- Bus Átha Cliath
- Bus Éireann
- Iarnród Éireann

In relation to our commercial ports, publication will occur following completion of all Annual General Meetings and presentation of the Annual Reports to Government.

Publication of the Annual Reports of the other, non-commercial, Bodies should take place within the timelines prescribed by their legislation and the Code of Practice. As part of standard corporate governance oversight arrangements, my Department monitors compliance with these requirements.

Sports Organisations

173. **Deputy Mick Barry** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the way in which his Department responded to representations made regarding complaints of bullying at a club (details supplied) and failures of process at club and GAA county board level in responding to these complaints; if this matter was brought to the attention of Sports Ireland by his Department. [25909/18]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I received a representation on 28 February 2018 relating to the club mentioned by the Deputy.

On 12 April I replied to the person who made the representation and informed them that the matter raised is a matter for the GAA as the National Governing Body for Gaelic Games. National Governing Bodies are independent, autonomous bodies and are responsible for their own governance procedures and competition rules for their sport. I have no role in the day to day operations of the GAA or any of the sporting bodies and it would be inappropriate for me to intervene.

I also advised the person that if they had any concerns about the welfare of a child, they should report those concerns to the Child and Family Agency TUSLA.

My officials forwarded a copy of the correspondence to Sport Ireland on 13 April.

I received further emails from the person on 26 April and 9 May seeking a contact person in Sport Ireland to correspond with. A reply issued on 11 June advising the person that any correspondence could be addressed to the CEO of Sport Ireland.

Child and Family Agency Data

174. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the num-

ber and locations of specialist domestic violence refuges; the location and number of specialist sexual violence services; her views on whether there is a deficit of services in these areas; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25744/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): 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.

Services provided include emergency refuge and support services for individuals and families fleeing domestic violence, community-based domestic violence support services, and rape crisis centres around the country.

I was pleased to secure an additional €1.7 million for domestic, sexual and gender-based violence services this year. This is the second year in succession that Tusla has received a significant increase in its funding in this area. Total funding available for domestic, sexual and gender-based violence services this year is €23.8m. I strongly support the work of Tusla, and I am committed to supporting the Agency in meeting the needs of individuals who experience domestic, sexual and gender-based violence. I recognise that there are challenges to be addressed in this area. Additional resources provided this year enable Tusla to address a number of these challenges which will ensure better outcomes for individuals and their families who need services and support. It is important that the needs of victims and survivors of domestic violence are met in the best way possible, with due attention to the quality, accessibility, and outcome of services.

Regarding the information requested about specific services and their respective locations, I have asked Tusla to forward the details to the Deputy directly.

Child and Family Agency Funding

175. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the funding provided to centres (details supplied) in each of the past four years; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25745/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): 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. Services provided include emergency refuge and support services for individuals and families fleeing domestic violence, community-based domestic violence support services, as well as 16 rape crisis centres around the country.

Table 1 provides information on the annual allocation of funds to rape crisis centres from 2015 to 2018.

Allocation of funds to rape crisis centres for years 2015 - 2018.

Organisation	2015	2016	2017	2018
Donegal Sexual Abuse and Rape Crisis Centre	€142,051	€142,000	€168,500	€177,000
Rape Crisis Midwest	€346,400	€346,400	€361,400	€376,400
Mayo Rape Crisis Centre	€168,400	€168,400	€188,400	€188,400
Kerry Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre	€208,000	€208,000	€214,000	€220,000
Wexford Rape Crisis and Sexual Abuse Crisis Service	€210,800	€210,800	€216,900	€214,300
Galway Rape Crisis Centre	€333,000	€363,000	€400,805	€373,000

Questions - Written Answers

Organisation	2015	2016	2017	2018
Rape Crisis and Sexual Abuse Counselling Centre - Sligo, Leitrim and West Cavan	€168,300	€168,300	€184,300	€200,300
Dublin Rape Crisis Centre	€1,043,257	€1,087,892	€1,141,627	€1,157,362
Rape Crisis North East	€138,110	€159,110	€169,110	€179,110
Carlow and South Leinster Rape Crisis Centre	€164,299	€163,500	€165,500	€163,500
Waterford Rape Crisis Centre	€240,200	€240,200	€240,200	€240,200
Tipperary Rape Crisis and Counselling Centre	€166,100	€166,100	€170,100	€166,100
Athlone Midland Rape Crisis Centre	€107,081	€106,300	€113,100	€110,500
Tullamore Rape Crisis Centre	€81,954	€84,300	€116,900	€114,300
Sexual Violence Centre Cork	€290,500	€290,500	€290,500	€290,500
Kilkenny Rape Crisis Centre	€175,397	€174,900	€179,500	€174,900

The following points should be noted when examining the data provided:

- The funding total for 2018 refers to the allocation of funds for the organisation in question in Tusla's budget for domestic, sexual and gender-based violence services. It is possible that the total monies provided to a service in 2018 may vary from the initial allocation, depending on service demands.

- The figures for the years 2015 to 2017 include some once-off payments made to services for service-related reasons.

At present, I am not in a position to advise on the level of funding that will be available for services next year. This issue will be clarified in the context of the 2019 Estimates process, and having regard to the overall level of funding available to Tusla next year. However, I can assure the Deputy that domestic, sexual and gender-based violence services are a priority for me.

It is important that the needs of victims and survivors of domestic violence are met in the best way possible, with due attention to the quality, accessibility, and outcome of services.

Child and Family Agency Funding

176. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the funding provided to a centre (details supplied) in each of the past four years; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25746/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): 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.

Services provided include emergency refuge and support services for individuals and families fleeing domestic violence, community-based domestic violence support services, and rape crisis centres around the country.

The organisation in question has received financial support from Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, since the foundation of the Agency in 2014.

Table 1 provides information on the annual allocation of funds to the organisation to which the Deputy refers from 2015 to 2018.

Table 1: Allocation of funds to the organisation in question for years 2015 - 2018.

2015	2016	2017	2018
€525,800	€536,200	€551,183	€536,200

Several points should be noted when examining the data provided:

- The funding total for 2018 refers to the allocation of funds for the organisation in question in Tusla's budget for domestic, sexual and gender-based violence services. It is possible that the total monies provided to a service in 2018 may vary from the initial allocation, depending on service demands.

- In 2017, the organisation was provided with an additional €15,000 on a once-off basis in order to support the sustainability of the organisation.

At present, I am not in a position to advise on the level of funding that will be available for services next year. This issue will be clarified in the context of the 2019 Estimates process, and having regard to the overall level of funding available to Tusla next year. However, I can assure the Deputy that domestic, sexual and gender-based violence services are a priority for me.

It is important that the needs of victims and survivors of domestic violence are met in the best way possible, with due attention to the quality, accessibility, and outcome of services.

Foster Care Agencies

177. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the foster care agencies engaged by Tusla in 2016, 2017 and to date in 2018. [25765/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I have written to Tusla for this information in the format requested by the Deputy. I can inform you that the following companies were engaged by Tusla for the provision of private foster care in the relevant timeframe

- Five Rivers Fostering Ltd.
- Fostering First Ireland Ltd.
- Orchard Children's Services Ltd.
- Care Visions Fostering
- Oaklodge Fostering Services
- Sorcha Homes Ltd./Horizon House
- St Christopher's Fellowship
- Fresh Start

Fresh Start are no longer providing fostering services.

It should be noted that children being cared for by a private foster care company remain in the care of Tusla at all times and have a Tusla allocated social worker. The Tusla Foster Care Committee approves all applications by the private company for families to be eligible to foster.

Registration of Births

178. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if her attention has been drawn to a case regarding an illegal birth registration (details supplied); if clarity will be given to persons affected by same; the way in which passports, inheritance rights, pensions and other legally binding documents secured by age and birth certificates will be affected; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25797/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): While there have been suspicions about the practice of incorrect registrations for many years, it has been extremely difficult to uncover clear evidence of the practice because of the deliberate failure by those involved to keep records.

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.

This is a very serious and sensitive issue. People have the right to know of their true origins and, where we have clear evidence, I believe we have an obligation to tell the people affected. Some may know already, but for others it will be entirely new and very difficult information indeed.

An experienced Information and Tracing social worker has been assigned to each of the 126 cases. They will be leading the process of making contact with those affected that can be identified. 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.

I would emphasise that the process will be measured, sensitive, and at the pace of the individual concerned. People should also be aware that it is a detailed, methodical process, and will take some time.

The assigned social worker will support individuals through the process and link them in to formal and informal supports and services, as required.

The Deputy will understand that as Minister I do not get, and nor should I, personal details of the individuals concerned. If the individual to whom the Deputy is referring to is one of the 126, Tusla will be touch with her, but this process may take a little time, as tracing is being done on the basis of records that are in the main over 50 years old. She can also, through the Tusla Helpline, apply for an information and tracing service, even if she is not one of the 126.

In relation to other issues of concern listed by the Deputy, I am aware that an incorrect birth registration can impact on a number of areas of a person's life. I will keep these issues under review, as they emerge, and will address in conjunction with my ministerial colleagues, as appropriate.

Child and Family Agency Data

179. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of instances detailed to her Department in which it was alleged that children were neglected or abused over a period of time without adequate intervention from State agencies; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25859/18]

186. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of reports notified to her Department relating to children at risk in each of the past two years; the degree to which it has been possible to arrange adequate and early follow-up in all cases; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25866/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I propose to take Questions Nos. 179 and 186 together.

My Department is not routinely informed of the neglect or abuse of children, and where such reports are made this information is passed immediately to Tusla, the Child and Family Agency. Tusla is the statutory body responsible for supporting and promoting the development, welfare and protection of children, and for providing or arranging for the provision of appropriate interventions, where these are needed. There is a requirement in the Child and Family Agency Act that Tusla is independent in the performance of its function, and reports of children at risk of neglect or abuse should be appropriately directed to Tusla.

Tusla publishes performance and activity data annually. The most recent date for which validated data is available is Q3 2017. Data is subject to verification before publication.

An open case is one which is assessed as needing a dedicated (allocated) social work service; cases awaiting allocation include new referrals, cases already in progress and children in care.

Referrals received, open cases and unallocated cases per quarter

Quarter	Referrals received in quarter	Open Cases at the end of quarter	Unallocated cases at end of quarter
Q3 2017	12,498	25,919	5,284
Q2 2017	14,263	25,866	5,893
Q1 2017	13,629	25,384	6,158
Q4 2016	12,097	25,034	5,413
Q3 2016	11,732	26,362	4,361
Q2 2016	12,264	26,214	5,610
Q1 2016	11,306	26,140	5,579
Q4 2015	10,993	26,655	6,718
Q3 2015	10,711	26,129	7,013

Youth Services Data

180. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs her plans and programmes to address issues of youth deprivation affecting young persons in socially and economically challenged urban areas; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25860/18]

181. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of programmes available or likely to become available through her Department to assist teenagers in all areas but particularly densely populated areas that are deemed to be in need of support or guidance; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25861/18]

184. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the degree to which her Department has identified issues affecting children or teenagers with a view to ensuring that adequate support and advice exists and is available to young persons that may

feel isolated for various reasons; the extent to which she expects ongoing progress in this area; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25864/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I propose to take Questions Nos. 180, 181 and 184 together.

I am pleased to confirm that an extra €1.5m has been allocated in current funding to support the provision of youth services in 2018. This will bring the total current youth funding available to my Department to €58.9m. The additional funding is being used for programmes that target disadvantaged young people.

My Department administers a range of funding schemes and programmes to support the provision of youth services to young people throughout the country including those from disadvantaged communities. The funding schemes support national and local youth work involving approximately 1,400 youth work staff working in youth services and communities throughout the country.

These schemes include the Youth Service Grant Scheme, under which funding is made available on an annual basis to thirty national and major regional youth organisations. The continued funding of voluntary youth organisations through the scheme is intended to ensure the emergence, promotion, growth and development of youth organisations with distinctive philosophies and programmes aimed at the social education of young people.

Targeted supports for disadvantaged, marginalised and at risk young people are provided through the Special Projects for Youth Scheme, the Young Peoples Facilities and Services Fund, Rounds 1 and 2, Local Drugs Task Force Projects and certain other programmes including the Local Youth Club Grant Scheme and Youth Information Centres.

The Local Youth Club Grant Scheme supports youth work activities at a local level. These grants are made available to all youth clubs and groups through the local Education and Training Boards. Each year, in the region of 1700 local youth clubs are eligible to apply under the scheme.

As the Deputy may be aware my Department is managing the most significant reform of youth services ever undertaken. This will provide an opportunity to identify need and to focus funding on young people most in need of intervention.

Last year each of the sixteen Education and Training Boards (ETB), was invited to nominate locations within their catchment areas for the establishment of new services and to nominate a project or service to be considered for augmentation. In total twenty-eight applications for new services were received. Subsequently I approved the establishment of ten new targeted youth services across the country and the expansion of a further seven to respond to new demand from increased population and needs of young people. Funding was also allocated for the establishment of 5 new sample projects in 2016. These projects provide youth services in areas of need as identified by the Education and Training Boards with responsibility for those regions.

Future development and investment in youth services will be informed by the mapping exercise completed last year which mapped youth service provision across the State. This mapping will assist the Department and the relevant ETB in developing a detailed social demographic profile in terms of both population numbers and deprivation levels. My Department is committed to working with ETBs to identify need and explore ways to address this need where it emerges.

My Department works closely with, and regularly meets, the national and major regional youth organisations, including the National Youth Council of Ireland, which has a representa-

tive role for the voluntary youth services.

Youth Services

182. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the extent to which she continues to liaise with the various youth groups throughout the country focusing on their need in their particular environment; the degree to which she expects to be in a position to offer support to such groups in 2018; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25862/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): My Department maintains close contact with the national youth organisations and I and officials from my Department meet formally with these organisations twice a year to share knowledge and information on developments in the youth sector. A separate meeting is held on that day with national organisations in receipt of targeted youth funding to keep them updated on the ongoing work on the Value for Money and Policy Review reforms.

Youth Officers of the Education and Training Boards provide an important support role to my Department in the co-ordination and administration of youth services at local level across the country. In order to keep my Department informed of their ongoing work, officials hold quarterly meetings attended by all Youth Officers from across the country. These meetings assist my Department in identifying service needs and emerging issues, particularly for vulnerable young people. The Youth Affairs Unit of my Department has set up a working group with five Youth Officers focussed on strategic planning for future capital funding for the youth sector.

My Department holds scheduled meetings with Youth Work Ireland twice a year in relation to the important work of this organisation. There is also ongoing active engagement between my Department and the youth constituency of the of the Better Outcomes Brighter Futures Advisory Council. A small number of national youth organisation representatives are members of this Council.

Officials from the Youth Affairs Unit are engaged with programmes run by the National Youth Council of Ireland, such as the Youth Arts Strategic Review and Plan Advisory Steering Group and the National Health Programme Strategic Planning Working Group, both of which receive funding from my Department.

Officials from my Department also meet with youth organisations on an individual basis when the need arises.

In 2018, €58.9 m has been allocated in current funding to support the provision of youth services, an increase of €1.5m on 2017. The additional funding is being used for programmes that target disadvantaged young people and to assist national youth organisations in their work to support local voluntary youth services. Funding to staff led youth services has generally been targeted at areas of disadvantage and not in proportion to the youth population of a given area.

Future development and investment in youth services will be informed by the mapping exercise completed last year, which mapped youth service provision across the State. This mapping will assist the Department and the relevant ETB in developing a detailed social demographic profile in terms of both population numbers and deprivation levels. My Department is committed to working with ETBs to identify need and explore ways to address this need where it emerges.

Youth Services

183. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the extent to which she, her Department and-or bodies under her aegis continue to liaise with the various youth groups throughout County Kildare with a view to addressing issues of their concern; the degree to which she expects to be in a position to offer support to such groups in 2018; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25863/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Youth Officers of the Education and Training Boards, including Kildare Wicklow ETB, provide an important support role to my Department in the co-ordination and administration of youth services at local level across the country. In order to keep my Department informed of their ongoing work, officials hold quarterly meetings attended by all Youth Officers from across the country. These meetings assist my Department in identifying service needs and emerging issues, particularly for vulnerable young people. The Youth Affairs Unit of my Department has set up a working group with five Youth Officers focussed on strategic planning for future capital funding for the youth sector.

My Department also maintains close contact with the national youth organisations and I and officials from my Department meet formally with these organisations twice a year to share knowledge and information on developments in the youth sector.

My Department administers a range of funding schemes and programmes to support the provision of youth services to young people throughout the country including those from disadvantaged communities.

In 2018, €58.9 m has been allocated in current funding to support the provision of youth services. In 2018, a provisional allocation of €539,283 has been made for the projects and services under Kildare Youth Services, which operates under Youth Work Ireland. My Department provides funding to Kildare Youth Services under the Special Projects for Youth Scheme in respect of six local youth projects in Athy, Naas, Leixlip, Newbridge, the Curragh and Kildare town and a Youth Information Centre in Naas.

In addition, I am pleased to approve the establishment the Capital Funding Scheme in 2018. The primary focus of this scheme will be to provide small to medium capital grants to qualifying youth projects which are in receipt of funding from DCYA. Some €2m has been made available nationally, and eligible youth projects in Kildare can make an application through Kildare Wicklow Education and Training Board.

Question No. 184 answered with Question No. 180.

Children in Care

185. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of children in residential care, foster care or other care facilities; the extent to which the numbers have fluctuated in recent years; her views on whether a specific response is warranted; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25865/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I can inform the Deputy that according to Tusla's most recent data (February 2018), there are a total of 6,161 children in care. Of these cases, 4,037 (65.5%) are in are in general foster care; 1,646 (26.7%)

are in foster care with a relative; 357 (6%) are in residential care; and 121 (2%) are in other care facilities, e.g. special care.

The following table will provide an insight into annual fluctuations of children in care over the last three years:

Number of Children in Care

	Feb 2016	Feb 2017	Feb 2018
General	4,100	4,127	4,037
Relative	1,832	1,807	1,646
Residential	331	351	357
Other	125	113	121
Total	6,388	6,398	6,161

I, and my officials, continue to engage directly with the Tusla Board and Senior Management Team to monitor and review the number of children in care.

Question No. 186 answered with Question No. 179.

Children in Care

187. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the extent to which her Department has received notification over the past two years of children or young adults being abused or at risk thereof in fosterage, residential or other care arrangements; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25867/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Tusla is the statutory body with responsibility for child protection and welfare in the State. I have written to Tusla to request the information to which the Deputy refers, and will revert once I have received a response.

Illegal Adoptions

188. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she has been assured that no illegal adoptions or placements of a permanent or temporary nature have taken place here in the past five years having particular regard to the need to protect against such activity; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25868/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): While there have been suspicions about the practice of illegal registrations for many years, it has been extremely difficult to uncover clear evidence of the practice because of the deliberate failure by those involved to keep records.

Clear evidence has now been uncovered by Tusla in 126 cases of the former adoption society St Patrick's Guild, and on 29th May I announced how these cases would be addressed.

In relation to whether such practices are still taking place, knowingly registering a birth incorrectly is an offence, and was an offence at the time of these Saint Patrick's Guild (SPG) files. By its very nature, the practice is covert and it would be impossible to confirm that no such activity has taken place in recent times. What I can assure the Deputy is that where a State

body receives evidence of illegal registrations, the necessary action, including engaging with an Garda Síochána, will be taken as quickly as possible.

The State has also safeguards in place in relation to adoption, including legislation enacted in 1952 to regulate adoption in the interests of children and their birth parents. The Adoption Authority of Ireland is responsible for effecting adoptions in Ireland, and I have no reason to suspect that there are any recent concerns in this area.

Bullying of Children

189. **Deputy Mick Barry** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the way in which her Department responded to representations made to it regarding complaints of systematic bullying of young persons at a club (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25910/18]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): On the 28th February 2018 my Department received correspondence relating to a complaint of systematic bullying at a sports club. The correspondence was forwarded to the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport. The complainant has been informed that the matter is being dealt with by the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport.

Community Services Programme Funding

190. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development if he will meet with a delegation (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25874/18]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The Community Services Programme (CSP) supports some 400 community organisations to provide local services through a social enterprise model, with funding provided as a contribution to the cost of a manager and an agreed number of full-time equivalent positions.

The organisation concerned submitted a business plan to Pobal in March 2017 as part of the normal CSP Re-Contracting Process for 2018-2020. The business plan did not satisfy CSP criteria and the organisation was awarded a one-year contract to end-December 2018.

The organisation may submit a revised business plan to Pobal as part of the re-contracting process for 2019-2020. To this end, a business plan template was provided to the organisation in May 2018, with a completed business plan expected to be submitted to Pobal in July 2018.

Pobal will assess the business plan against CSP criteria and will forward a recommendation to my Department for decision thereafter. In the meantime, and in lieu of a meeting, I encourage the organisation to engage positively with Pobal during the re-contracting process to maximise the CSP funding available to the organisation.

Jobseeker's Benefit Appeals

191. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when a decision will be made on a jobseeker's benefit claim by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25747/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was referred to an Appeals Officer on 11th June 2018, who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on the documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions in relation to social welfare entitlements.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Back to Work Enterprise Allowance Scheme

192. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if the back to work enterprise allowance scheme is available to persons (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25757/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Back to Work Enterprise Allowance (BTWEA) is designed to provide a monetary incentive for people who are on social welfare payments to develop a business while allowing them to retain a reducing proportion of their qualifying social welfare payment over two years; 100% in year 1 and 75% in year 2.

All Jobseekers, including those who were previously self-employed but became unemployed during the recession, can avail of the BTWEA once they are setting up a new enterprise that is tradeable and tangible and they have not availed of BTWEA within the past 5 years. My Department will be happy to assist any jobseeker who wishes to avail of this scheme. He or she can seek assistance by contacting their local Intreo office.

Invalidity Pension Applications

193. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the progress to date in the determination of an application for invalidity pension in the case of a person (details supplied); when a decision will issue; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25758/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): Invalidity pension (IP) is a payment for people who are permanently incapable of work because of illness or incapacity and who satisfy the pay related social insurance (PRSI) contribution conditions.

The department received a claim for IP for the gentleman concerned on 16 February 2018. He was refused IP on the grounds that the medical conditions for the scheme were not satisfied. He was notified on the 07 June 2018 of this decision, the reasons for it and of his right of review and appeal.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Social Welfare Appeals Data

194. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of cases referred to appeal in each of the past three years to date; the number of cases granted on appeal and refused in the same period; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25770/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The following table provide the details which have been requested by the Deputy for the years 2015 to 2017 and to the end of May 2018.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions in relation to social welfare entitlements.

All claim decisions taken by the Department's deciding officers are appealable to the Chief Appeals Officer. In any year about 85% of all claims are awarded and just 1% are appealed.

The figures provided in the tables for appeals which had a favourable outcome for the appellant relate to appeals which were either allowed in full or in part by an Appeals Officer, or which were resolved by way of a revised decision in favour of the appellant by a Deciding Officer/Designated Person.

There are a number of reasons why a decision which was refused at first instance might be successful on appeal and it is not necessarily the case that the first decision was incorrect. It is often the case that new evidence is provided with an appeal and that, as a result, the original decision may be revised by the Deciding Officer or Designated Person. This was the case in 37.1% of favourable appeal outcomes in 2016 (5,100 cases), 37.6% of favourable appeal outcomes in 2017 (4,283 cases) and 34.7% of favourable appeals to date in 2018 (1,507 cases).

Where the decision was not revised by the Department in light of the appeal contentions, further evidence is often provided by the appellant as the appeal process proceeds and in addition, the Appeals Officer may gain insights when they meet the appellant in person at oral hearing which may influence the outcome of the appeal.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Appeal Receipts and Outcome Decisions of Appeals Finalised 2015 – 2018

Year	Appeal Receipts	Appeals Finalised	Favourable Decisions	Appeals Disallowed	Withdrawn
2015	24,475	25,406	14,946	9,167	1,293
2016	22,461	23,220	13,754	8,336	1,130
2017	19,658	18,980	11,405	6,434	1,141
2018 (to 31/5//2018)	7,566	7,562	4,346	2,781	435

Back to Work Enterprise Allowance Scheme

195. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection her plans regarding the continuation of the income tax relief on the back to work enterprise allowance; the number who have benefitted from the scheme in the past three years; the number that are on the scheme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25779/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The

Back to Work Enterprise Allowance (BTWEA) is designed to provide a monetary incentive for people who are on social welfare payments to develop a business while allowing them to retain a reducing proportion of their qualifying social welfare payment over two years; 100% in year 1 and 75% in year 2. At the end May 2018, there were 8,300 participants on the BTWEA scheme.

Questions on the application of income tax relief, such as the Start Your Own Business Relief scheme, should be directed to my colleague, the Minister for Finance Public Expenditure and Reform.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

State Pension (Contributory) Appeals

196. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the progress to date in the determination of an appeal for an increase in the rate of allowance for a qualified adult in respect of the State pension (contributory) in the case of persons (details supplied); if an oral hearing will be accommodated in this instance; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25792/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was registered in that office on 26th April 2018. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant Departmental papers and comments by the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought. When these papers have been received from the Department, the case in question will be referred to an Appeals Officer who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on the documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral appeal hearing.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions in relation to social welfare entitlements.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

JobPath Data

197. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of persons in the JobPath programme on 8 June 2018 by the number in Seetec and those in Turas Nua, respectively; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25809/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): As the Deputy will be aware, JobPath is an employment service which helps long-term unemployed people and those most at risk of becoming long-term unemployed to secure and sustain paid employment.

On the 8th of June 2018, there were 59,495 jobseekers in receipt of activation support through the JobPath service; 33,000 were engaged with Seetec, and 26,495 were engaged with Turas Nua.

Exceptional Needs Payment Applications

198. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if the refusal to award an exceptional needs payment in the case of a person (details supplied) will be reviewed; if the matter will be urgently investigated with a view to addressing at early date; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25820/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The person concerned made an application for an Exceptional Needs Payment for assistance with insufficient funds and travel costs. The application was refused on the 15/5/2018 as the person's means are in excess of the Supplementary Welfare Allowance rate.

The request for a review has been acknowledged and the process has been initiated.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Workplace Relations Services

199. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the reason a reply has not issued from the Workplace Relations Commission to a person (details supplied); when a reply will issue; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25821/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): While responsibility for employment rights policy and legislation transferred to my Department pursuant to the transfer of functions that took effect in September 2017, responsibility for the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC), the statutory authority responsible for ensuring compliance with employment rights legislation, did not transfer across. The WRC continues to operate under the aegis of the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation. Accordingly, I have referred the Deputy's question to the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation for her attention.

Back to Work Enterprise Allowance Scheme

200. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the processing times for the back to work enterprise allowance in Dublin 15; and if a delay exists, the measures that will be put in place for the timely processing of applications. [25826/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Back to Work Enterprise Allowance (BTWEA) applicants are required to produce a business plan as part of the application process so that the viability of the new business can be considered. The length of time it takes to prepare a business plan can vary from case to case depending on the nature and complexity of the proposed enterprise.

Regarding the processing time for BTWEA applications in Dublin 15, all claims for BTWEA are awarded within a week of the proposed start date of the new business. For claims that are disallowed, the customer is issued with a disallowance within one week of the receipt of the application. It is open to the customer to request a review if they are dissatisfied with the decision.

Where a customer proposes to start their business on a particular date, staff approve the claim a week before the proposed start date so that the customer receives their primary payment up to commencement of the BTWEA allowance.

There is currently no delay in the Dublin 15 area and all applications are dealt with in a timely fashion.

Social Welfare Benefits Data

201. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the budget for the reasonable accommodation fund; and the spend and the underspend in the fund in 2016, 2017 and to date in 2018. [25834/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The reasonable accommodation fund assists employers to take appropriate measures to enable a person with a disability/impairment to have access to employment by providing a range of grants. These grants and supports include the workplace equipment adaptation grant, the personal reader grant, the job interview interpreter grant and the employee retention grant.

The purpose of the scheme is to assist unemployed people with disabilities to gain access to the open labour market by providing grants for “reasonable accommodations” in the private sector and to support private sector employers in the employment of people with disabilities.

The reasonable accommodation fund is a demand-led scheme in that expenditure arises in response to eligible so the question of an underspend does not apply. The actual expenditure on the components is set out in the following table:

Table: Expenditure on the Reasonable Accommodation Fund for People with Disabilities

Year	2016	2017	2018 (May)
Workplace equipment and adaptation grant	€54,041	€69,254	€49,750
Personal reader grant	€16,537	€31,619	€3,932
Job interview interpreter grant	€7,244	€5,714	€1,327
Employee retention grant	€0	€0	€0
Total	€77,822	€106,587	€55,009

I hope this clarifies the issue for the Deputy.

Data Protection

202. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the steps she took in the context of GDPR to ensure her Department’s transfer of personal data of persons to Seetec and Turas Nua was compliant with GDPR rules; if she has had engagement with JobPath operators on the way in which they are compliant with GDPR rules in the context of processing and storing personal data of persons; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25845/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): My Department collects and holds large volumes of personal data on customers and is very aware of the need to have adequate data protection policies, procedures and structures in place in line

with the GDPR. Preparations for the GDPR have been overseen by the Department's Data Management Programme Board. The Department has a dedicated GDPR implementation team in place and has commissioned external expertise to assist it with achieving GDPR compliance.

All contracted providers of Activation services act on behalf of the Department for the purpose of delivering these services and are subject to strict obligations imposed by the Department in terms of data protection.

The purpose of sharing information is to assist in the development of tailored plans for individual jobseekers in order to support them back into paid employment.

JobPath providers are contractually required to register with the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner. Data protection legislation requires that personal data shall be kept only for one or more specified and lawful purposes and that personal data shall be used and disclosed only in ways compatible with these purposes. The legislation also requires that the data should be adequate, relevant and not excessive. Any suspected breach of the data protection legislation will be investigated by the Department and may also be a matter for the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner. JobPath providers may use jobseekers' data only for the purposes of delivering employment services for the Department.

My Department has regular meetings with both JobPath providers to ensure that they are fulfilling their contractual obligations including those concerned with data protection compliance. Both companies have undertaken regular independent audits of their data processes and procedures as part of these contractual obligations, in addition, the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner has recently conducted audits of each company. Employees of both companies, and their subcontractors, are subject to the same data protection laws as Departmental staff.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Allowance Applications

203. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an application for a carer's allowance by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25873/18]

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.

It is a condition for receipt of CA that every claimant shall furnish such certificates, documents, information and evidence as may be required for the purposes of deciding their claim. It is also a condition for receipt of a CA that the person being cared for must have a disability whose effect is that they require full-time care and attention.

This is defined as requiring from another person, continual supervision and frequent assistance throughout the day in connection with normal bodily functions or continuous supervision in order to avoid danger to him or herself and likely to require that level of care for at least twelve months.

I confirm that the department received an application for CA from the person concerned on 23 January 2018. The evidence submitted in support of this application was examined and the deciding officer decided that this evidence did not indicate that the full-time care requirement

was satisfied. In addition, she failed to furnish information requested by the deciding officer on 21 March 2018.

The person concerned was notified on 24 April 2018 of this decision, the reasons for it and of her right of review and appeal.

A review of this decision was sought on 8 May 2018. The outcome of the review is that the original decision remains unchanged.

The person concerned was notified on 30 May 2018 of the outcome and of her right of appeal.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Social Welfare Benefits Data

204. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of young persons between 18 to 25 years of age in receipt of jobseeker's benefit and allowance and signing for credits that are in the low, medium and high prediction of exit date categories; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25879/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I am informed that at the end of May there were a total of 25,069 persons aged 18 to 25 years of age in receipt of jobseeker's benefit and allowance and signing for credits. A breakdown of this number by scheme and probability of exit (PEX) category is detailed in the following tabular statement.

Number of persons aged 18 to 25 years of age in receipt of jobseeker's benefit and allowance and signing for credits at the end of May 2018

PEX Category	Jobseekers Allowance	Jobseekers Benefit	Jobseekers Credits	Grand Total
Low	4,937	24	1	4,962
Medium	14,935	860	75	15,870
High	780	902	19	1,701
No Category	2,068	408	60	2,536
Grand Totals	22,720	2,194	155	25,069

Jobseeker's Allowance Data

205. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the estimated cost of increasing the weekly payment to young persons 25 years of age on the €152.80 rate of jobseeker's allowance by €22.60 to €175.40 per week; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25880/18]

206. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the estimated cost of increasing the weekly payment to young persons 18 to 24 years of age on the €107.70 rate of jobseeker's allowance by €45.15 to €152.85 per week; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25881/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): I propose to take Questions Nos. 205 and 206 together.

The full year cost of increasing the jobseeker's allowance payment for 25 year olds on the €152.80 weekly rate by €22.60 to €175.40 per week is €3.17 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 by €45.15 to €152.85 per week is €37.3 million in 2019. This includes the cost of increasing the weekly €107.70 rate for the relevant qualified adults up 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 in various circumstances, such as in cases where the jobseeker has a qualified child or for 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.

Social Welfare Benefits Data

207. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of young persons who, as care leavers, were not subject to the reduced social welfare rates from 18 to 24 years of age but who are subject to the lower rate of €152.80 when they reach 25 years of age; the cost of extending the full adult rates to young persons of 25 years of age in this category; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25882/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): In line with other EU and OECD jurisdictions where such measures feature, reduced rates for younger jobseeker's allowance recipients were first introduced in 2009 and extended to those under 26 in Budget 2014. These measures were introduced to protect young people from welfare dependency by providing young jobseekers 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 a higher weekly payment of €198 which is the maximum personal rate for jobseeker's allowance. In addition, recipients of jobseekers allowance under 26 years of age who have dependent children are not subject to the reduced rates.

Reduced rates also do not apply to people under 25 who were in the care of the State during the year prior to their 18th birthday. They are only subject to the age-related reduced rate of €152.80 per week when they reach 25 years of age. My Department does not have statistics available on the number of young people who, having left the care of the State are subject to the lower rate of €152.80 when they reach 25 years of age.

People who leave the care of the State and who inform my Department are dealt with on a

case by case basis to ensure that they receive the rate of payment appropriate to their circumstances. My Department actively engages with Tusla and non-Government organisations in providing the necessary support to vulnerable young people leaving care who are experiencing homelessness or are in insecure situations.

Mortgage Arrears Information and Advice Service

208. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of the future funding of the dedicated mortgage arrears service run by MABS when the current round of funding expires at the end of 2018; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25883/18]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS), under the aegis of the Citizens Information Board, provides assistance to people, in particular those on low incomes or living on social welfare payments, who are over-indebted and need help and advice with debt problems. As part of its free services, MABS provides help and advice to those in mortgage arrears.

The role of MABS was expanded in 2015 with the establishment of a Dedicated Mortgage Arrears MABS service (DMA MABS) across the MABS network, to help people specifically with home mortgage arrears. Specialist DMA advisors are working across 27 locations countrywide, assisting borrowers to assess the options available to them and, where required, negotiating with lenders on their behalf. To date, the DMA service has helped over 5,400 such borrowers.

In 2018, over €2m has been allocated to the DMA service and its continued funding beyond 2018, will be considered in the in the context of the Citizens Information Board overall budgetary requirements for 2019.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Social Insurance

209. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if flexibility will be shown to self-employed persons who were only able to make contributions since 1988 and part-time workers in 1991 in view of her proposals whereby all workers retiring from 2020 will only get a full State pension if they made PRSI contributions for 40 years. [25927/18]

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 all new state pension contributory claims from 2020 onwards. This is distinct from the interim TCA model being made available as an option for those affected by the 2012 rate band changes.

I understand that the Deputy's question may be based on an inaccurate report in a national newspaper last month. There is no basis to state that all workers retiring from 2020 will only get a full State pension if they made PRSI contributions for 40 years. 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 28th May. Issues such as the number of years required for a full pension, transitional arrangements and treatment of the self-employed are

addressed in the consultation questions, and in the accompanying documentation.

Additionally, I outlined at the launch that these final details will not be decided upon until I have considered the submissions received in this process, a point which was re-emphasised by two of my officials, in their presentations to stakeholders and press who were present. It was explicitly stressed in those presentations that, whatever the final model, it would have to accommodate those who were self-employed before 1988.

It might be noted that if such matters had already been decided upon, there would be little point in conducting a public consultation on the design of the final system.

This public consultation is available on my Department's website and I would encourage all interested stakeholders to contribute to the survey there. The materials included as part of the consultation examine issues such as the extension of compulsory PRSI for self-employed in 1988, and seeks the views of stakeholders on how best to ensure they are not disadvantaged as a result of this reform.

The position regarding part-time workers is complicated. As in most countries, there are thresholds below which employees and self-employed persons are not compulsorily covered for pensions under the PRSI system. Generally, the people below these thresholds receive lower pay than can be received while on Jobseekers benefit, and so they will often be either in receipt of a jobseekers payment (and credited contributions) in respect of the days they do not work, or they will be people who would not qualify for a jobseekers payment.

In April 1990, the threshold for employees changed from being based on time worked (i.e. less than 18 hours in a week) to a monetary amount. Some were affected by this change at that time but many others were not. However, over time this monetary amount has been very significantly eroded by inflation, and is now only €38 in a given week.

It is not the case that this reform disadvantages part-time workers. Most of those who fell below the PRSI threshold in the past (and who do not have credited contributions for those periods), whether in the 1990s or today, generally have significant gaps which result in reduced entitlements under the current Yearly Average system. In most cases, such workers facing a reduced pension under the current system are expected to fare significantly better under the TCA approach.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Local Authority Finances

210. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the level of debt at 31 December 2017 owed by each local authority by lender in each of the years 2010 to 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [25816/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy John Paul Phelan): It is a matter for each local authority to manage its own finances in a prudent and sustainable manner. In accordance with the Local Government Act 2001, a decision to borrow money is a reserved function of the elected members of a local authority. Section 106 of the Act provides that local authorities must obtain the consent of the appropriate Minister to undertake borrowing.

My Department does not hold the information in the format requested however the total loans payable from 2010 to 2016, as reported in the audited Annual Financial Statements of lo-

cal authorities, are set out in the following tables. Table 1 contains total loan payable figures for 88 county, city and town councils from 2010 to 2013 and table 2 contains the figures for 2014 to 2016 (the most recent year for which audited accounts are available) for the 31 local authorities. The decrease in total loans payable from €4.7bn in 2013 to €4.1bn in 2014 is mainly attributable to the establishment of Irish Water.

Table 1

County Councils	2010	2011	2012	2013
Carlow	40,962,899	47,838,598	47,068,117	46,657,346
Cavan	23,829,336	23,508,016	23,398,461	25,796,330
Clare	119,035,823	111,590,074	122,268,632	113,149,495
Cork	514,459,652	488,372,123	499,514,320	481,978,303
Donegal	123,324,378	150,270,441	163,069,485	156,050,791
Fingal	443,820,638	461,583,862	447,409,384	436,324,398
Dun Laoghaire Rathdown	167,651,292	171,683,471	163,457,311	147,477,389
Galway	110,126,595	107,680,950	113,998,829	115,743,038
Kerry	97,283,878	96,045,098	94,033,598	89,308,476
Kildare	163,566,100	148,411,290	143,133,885	138,486,021
Kilkenny	55,073,315	52,896,425	50,185,534	48,658,902
Laois	129,866,968	125,010,439	125,995,507	120,227,156
Leitrim	16,449,042	14,954,806	13,956,169	13,007,139
Limerick	65,652,024	59,853,252	59,432,285	56,161,861
Longford	48,865,576	48,297,274	48,359,580	50,595,362
Louth	31,438,555	30,966,209	30,404,236	40,549,768
Mayo	109,749,911	112,396,604	129,674,681	126,611,707
Meath	92,862,599	88,061,530	86,564,972	84,706,118
Monaghan	34,845,191	32,694,721	30,581,711	29,145,993
North Tipperary	53,477,681	50,901,703	49,640,649	47,898,142
Offaly	66,958,610	64,320,895	62,517,377	59,805,560
Roscommon	14,573,427	14,997,227	26,010,553	23,577,842
Sligo	73,744,717	69,756,187	76,759,641	79,951,950
South Dublin	261,526,564	247,270,126	240,862,951	233,717,692
South Tipperary	68,981,434	69,105,132	68,027,034	64,256,776
Waterford	48,286,468	48,121,978	55,990,723	53,136,325
Westmeath	107,922,722	104,964,878	103,256,860	103,407,557
Wexford	166,274,245	158,862,867	152,895,439	145,887,335
Wicklow	94,584,015	102,237,071	113,866,434	113,255,807
City Councils				
Cork	179,267,920	176,107,001	171,161,952	164,325,413
Dublin	921,257,895	900,384,710	876,746,153	806,301,787
Galway	117,516,778	106,515,331	105,446,566	92,471,249
Limerick	25,612,289	23,379,665	21,372,734	19,267,345
Waterford	84,536,828	83,889,307	82,103,663	82,475,797
Town/Borough Councils				

Questions - Written Answers

Clonmel	5,021,932	83,889,307	4,559,354	4,237,813
Drogheda	71,587,301	66,518,084	67,282,133	67,881,888
Kilkenny	728,220	1,040,189	1,908,666	2,748,139
Sligo	42,617,756	42,393,450	41,476,210	40,141,695
Wexford	4,649,717	4,464,728	6,975,047	6,628,928
Arklow	65,750	57,303	47,998	37,527
Athlone	3,955,029	3,798,471	7,917,686	7,513,609
Athy	4,473,650	4,438,228	4,403,759	4,368,445
Ballina	81,996	66,299	48,773	4,927,435
Ballinasloe	0	0	0	0
Birr	299,929	283,252	268,454	253,036
Bray	7,453,996	7,473,146	7,460,426	7,443,806
Buncrana	0	0	0	0
Bundoran	3,282,833	3,062,802	2,820,152	2,576,455
Carlow	2,750,000	2,750,000	2,750,000	2,750,000
Carrick on Suir	420,247	412,460	409,454	391,496
Carrickmacross	0	0	0	0
Cashel	0	0	0	0
Castlebar	11,965,457	11,832,229	8,694,331	8,548,930
Castleblayney	61,343	54,473	47,434	40,145
Cavan	0	0	0	0
Clonakilty	852,895	0	0	0
Clones	171,631	165,476	158,658	151,447
Cobh	0	0	0	0
Dundalk	50,381,551	51,420,498	52,811,467	51,569,730
Dungarvan	39,369	34,257	1,069,683	1,047,078
Ennis	8,546,959	9,097,061	8,419,420	8,092,762
Enniscorthy	4,528	0	0	0
Fermoy	574,537	549,319	511,007	456,051
Kells	58,200	50,225	43,843	38,094
Killarney	3,228,865	2,909,326	2,572,946	2,149,086
Kilrush	535,888	414,499	350,137	287,520
Kinsale	195,456	155,033	136,705	115,548
Letterkenny	9,834,861	9,307,869	15,060,497	14,479,938
Listowel	815,875	831,278	846,989	860,761
Longford	3,915,903	3,620,704	3,347,946	3,080,969
Macroom	0	0	0	0
Mallow	3,814,130	0	0	0
Midleton	0	0	0	0
Monaghan	1,066,114	897,562	697,235	503,050
Naas	18,048,496	7,787,767	6,880,014	6,577,614
Navan	5,376,141	8,591,992	8,173,994	7,737,001
Nenagh	1,834,779	2,821,718	2,810,291	3,298,568
New Ross	1,072,500	986,548	3,097,715	3,068,708
Skibbereen	2,368,259	2,231,013	2,179,420	2,108,989

Templemore	0	0	0	0
Thurles	0	0	0	0
Tipperary	0	0	0	0
Tralee	15,117,089	14,270,363	14,605,261	14,847,883
Trim	3,048,883	3,206,457	3,011,456	2,811,424
Tullamore	8,357,585	8,271,130	8,196,978	7,944,337
Westport	5,152,959	4,484,523	4,299,177	4,106,865
Wicklow	5,991,184	6,010,383	2,910,088	2,815,038
Youghal	1,693,765	1,565,628	1,428,883	1,281,008
TOTAL	4,984,898,923	4,965,144,315	4,899,855,109	4,710,290,983

Table 2

Local Authority	2014	2015	2016
Carlow Co Co	45,857,903	45,145,162	38,402,042
Cavan Co Co	18,592,834	21,845,988	20,862,244
Clare Co Co	97,548,382	89,450,510	84,342,399
Cork Co Co	148,194,542	141,018,875	139,390,254
Cork City Council	426,497,964	414,577,969	392,676,369
Donegal Co Co	136,795,154	130,733,747	122,997,563
Dublin City Council	637,703,649	596,969,354	527,989,902
Dún Laoghaire Rathdown Co Co	150,679,876	137,541,877	130,182,870
Fingal Co Co	416,064,917	381,164,320	354,784,072
Galway Co Co	81,637,737	71,491,020	68,545,335
Galway City Council	53,108,775	46,435,573	43,989,379
Kerry Co Co	85,054,498	81,833,380	78,148,225
Kildare Co Co	125,499,719	118,521,737	111,371,942
Kilkenny Co Co	39,919,413	39,420,823	52,581,452
Laois Co Co	114,750,225	109,334,323	105,523,473
Leitrim Co Co	7,393,563	6,836,490	6,951,370
Limerick Co Co	79,148,544	66,373,599	81,401,809
Longford Co Co	41,103,418	38,518,037	36,017,985
Louth Co Co	157,187,491	151,259,289	151,892,259
Mayo Co Co	119,928,557	130,620,743	122,965,759
Meath Co Co	88,374,283	83,857,339	78,942,795
Monaghan Co Co	23,561,705	22,189,466	20,577,527
Offaly Co Co	65,815,150	56,203,593	54,373,636
Roscommon Co Co	15,977,008	22,890,563	29,074,951
Sligo Co Co	105,508,672	103,000,765	100,647,098
South Dublin County Council	228,705,121	213,856,678	199,454,190
Tipperary Co Co	111,209,345	105,418,736	99,604,796
Waterford Co Co	130,067,420	126,725,875	125,586,877
Westmeath Co Co	84,093,101	79,614,108	77,068,918
Wexford Co Co	137,619,278	130,683,537	127,608,298
Wicklow Co Co	91,089,894	86,374,220	79,865,547

Local Authority	2014	2015	2016
Total	4,064,688,138	3,849,907,699	3,663,821,335

Housing Adaptation Grant Data

211. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the budget for the housing adaptation grant for persons with disabilities; the number of persons who have received the grant; and the average number of grants provided to persons over the past five years including the current spend to date for 2018, in tabular form. [25835/18]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Damien English): My Department provides funding under the suite of Housing Adaptation Grant Schemes for Older People and People with a Disability, in respect of private housing. 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 recently announced funding allocation in 2018 for the schemes is €66.25m, comprising €53m Exchequer funding and €13.25m from local authority resources. Details of the allocations for these grant schemes in 2018 are available at the following link: [Housing Schemes](#).

At the end of May 2018, over 28% of this allocation has been spent.

Information on these grant schemes, including the numbers of grants funded per annum and the funding provided to each local authority, is available on my Department's website at the following link [Housing Scheme Statistics](#).

My Department also provides funding to local authorities under the Disabled Persons Grants Scheme, for adaptations and extensions to the existing social housing stock to meet the needs of local authority tenants. Funding under this scheme has increased progressively in recent years; from a position of €7m in 2013, funding of over €13m was provided in both 2016 and 2017, supporting improvements in over 1,000 houses in 2016 and over 1,300 houses in 2017. The average grant in 2017 was approximately €10,000.

As local authorities have delegated responsibility in the use of the DPG scheme and the distribution of the funding is a matter for them to administer, data in relation to the number of social homes improved or adapted was not collected prior to 2016.

Local authorities have submitted to my Department details of their work proposals and related funding requirements for this scheme in 2018. These have now been evaluated and funding allocations will be confirmed to the local authorities shortly. In order to ensure that there were no delays for priority and urgent cases, all local authorities were advised that they can undertake works of up to 65% of their 2017 allocation, in advance of the 2018 full year allocation. This has allowed them to plan and progress works under the scheme and will support the full utilisation of the 2018 allocation by end-year.

Wildlife Control

212. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht her plans to have a cull in the population of seals (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [25876/18]

13 June 2018

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): There are two species of seal in Irish waters - the Harbour or Common Seal and the more numerous Grey Seal. Both are protected under the EU Habitats Directive and Ireland is obliged to monitor their populations and report to the European Commission on their conservation status. A standardised monitoring programme has been in place for both species since 2009. The most recent report on their conservation status was submitted to the European Commission in June 2013 and is available on the website *www.npws.ie*.

As part of my Department's established seal monitoring programme, Grey Seal and Harbour Seal numbers have continued to be recorded around the country. The next conservation assessment of the status of both seal species is under preparation and is due for submission to the Commission in early 2019

Seals have a broad diet which varies depending on the species of seal, the geographic region and also the availability of fish and other prey. Studies of the interaction between seals and various commercial fisheries in Ireland are ongoing. This work by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, the Marine Institute and An Bord Iascaigh Mhara, towards which my Department provides technical and licensing input under relevant conservation legislation, includes the recording of seal depredation (damage to fish or removal of fish by seals during fishery operations) as part of the National At Sea Catch Sampling Programme. It also involves targeted regionally based studies concerning seal bycatch for example and the ongoing development of acoustic deterrence to mitigate seal fisheries interactions.

In relation to seal predation on salmonids, for example, a study published in 2014 by Inland Fisheries Ireland, focusing on two estuaries of significance for native salmon, found considerable differences in the amount of salmonids in the diet of locally occurring seals and concluded that the removal of salmonids by seals and other predators must be placed in the context of the amount removed by fisheries (see link).

All of these studies will continue to inform policy in relation to seal protection and meeting our obligations under the EU Habitats Directive.